

SEND and the Graduated Approach

Advice and guidance for Social Care and Early Help

This guide is designed to assist Social Care and Early Help staff in understanding the graduated approach and considering the support and services that should be implemented to support children and young people with SEND. It is also to support conversations with parents/carers regarding the graduated approach across Education, Health and Social Care.



The Graduated Approach

When considering SEND support social care and early help staff should be aware that Sefton is a fully inclusive authority and expects all school settings to promote a positive ethos of inclusion which is supported and driven through Senior Leadership Teams.

According to The SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years (January 2015), the Graduated Approach is explained in the following terms:

“Where a pupil is identified as having SEN, schools should take action to remove barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place. This SEN support should take the form of a four-part cycle through which earlier decisions and actions are revisited, refined, and revised with a growing understanding of the pupil’s needs and of what supports the pupil in making good progress and securing good outcomes. This is known as the graduated approach.”

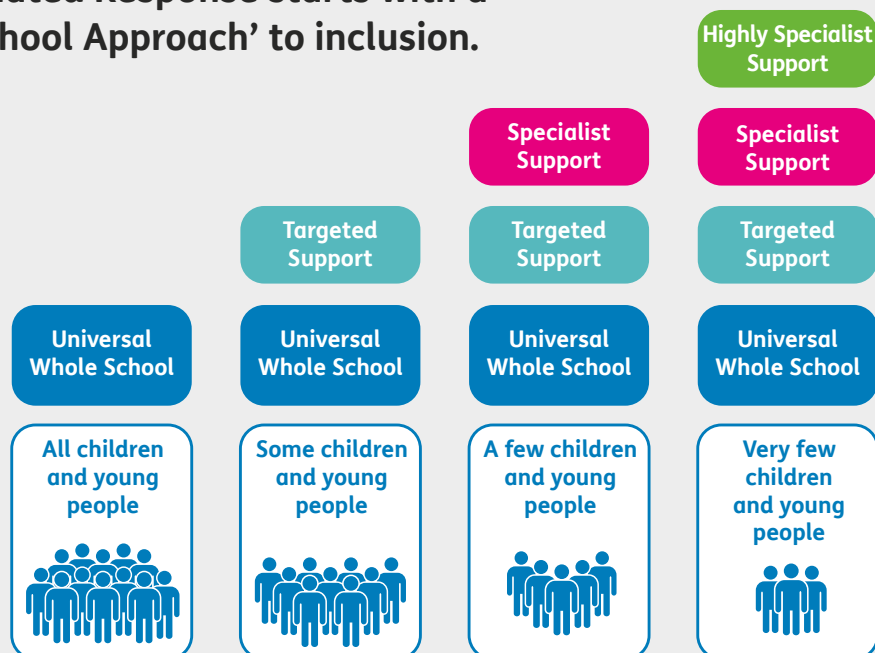
An introduction to Graduated Approach

A pupil has SEN where their learning difficulty or disability calls for special educational provision, namely provision different from or additional to that normally available to pupils of the same age.

A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age or has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.



The Graduated Response starts with a 'Whole School Approach' to inclusion.



Specialist Support: An Education Health and Care Plan, applied for when SEN Support is not enough to ensure that the child is making progress. The child may have a diagnosed need and there is evidence that they need significantly more than what has already been put in place.

Targeted Support: A child is recorded as K on the SEN register as they have access to additional support in school through interventions/support which are reviewed termly. This is guided by the SENCO in collaboration with parents/carers and children and following the graduated approach.

Universal Offer (whole school): All a child's needs are met through high quality teaching in the classroom – nothing additional is put in place and the child is making progress (they might have a diagnosed special needs and/or learning difficulties, teachers make adjustments accordingly). They have access to the universal offer and this meets their needs

Definition of Disability

Many children and young people who have SEN may have a disability under the Equality Act 2010 – that is:

- ‘a physical or mental impairment which has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.’
- ‘Long-term’ is defined as ‘a year or more’ and ‘substantial’ is defined as ‘more than minor or trivial’. This definition includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing, and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, and cancer. Children and young people with such conditions do not necessarily have SEN, but a disabled child or young person may be deemed to have SEN if they require special educational provision.





Role of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCO)

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCO) is integral in inspiring inclusive practice in the school setting and ensuring the best possible outcomes for all children and young people. The statutory requirements around this role are set out in the Children and Families Act (2015), the SEND Regulations (2015) and The SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015).

This role involves:

- Ensuring all practitioners in the setting understand their responsibilities to children with SEN and the setting's approach to identifying and meeting SEN
- Advising and supporting colleagues
- Ensuring parents are closely involved throughout and that their insight informs actions taken by the setting.
- Liaising with professionals and agencies beyond the setting
- Working with the Headteacher and Governing Body to ensure that the school meets its responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010) regarding reasonable adjustments and access arrangements
- Liaising with pre- and future providers of education at key transition points in a learners school career
- Publish the SEND Information Report

SENDCOs are an important point of contact for social care staff who need to discuss an individual's SEND support, especially where there is a high level of complexity.

All mainstream settings have a statutory obligation to ensure that all children on their roll have access to the graduated response and should provide reasonable adjustments to their provision (physically and academically). Reasonable adjustments, incorporate the notion that settings should be making efficient use of resources, so schools should be offering SEN Support which explores and uses the graduated approach before applying for an EHCP assessment. [A Guide For Professionals](#)

If a child's lack of progress is potentially a result of wider issues it is often pertinent to address those issues before pursuing an SEN diagnosis. Intensive interventions to close the gap can have positive outcomes and reduces the need to put children through further assessment and scrutiny unnecessarily.

Identification: Best Practice

Schools should have clear systems and processes in place to support the identification of learners with SEND. This process should include:

- The raising of an initial concern (this may be by the class teacher, parent/carer, child or young person, SENDCo, School or relevant specialist)
- Making of adjustments/adaptations and monitoring of the learners' responses
- This should be recorded on school documentation e.g., Record of Enhanced Provision/Raising a Concern Form
- Monitoring of learner's responses over a specific time frame (e.g., a term)
- Review of the learners' progress with a decision regarding whether the child/young person could be best supported with a SEN Support Plan
- At each step, parents and carers and pupils should be included in the process
- Schools should also have a clear process for removing children/young people from their SEN Register following discussions with parents/carers



The Local Offer

Link for EHCP including explainer videos - [Education, Health and Care Assessment and Plans \(EHCP\) | The Sefton Directory](#)

All local authorities have a statutory obligation to have a 'Local Offer' where they provide clear and accessible information about the provision available locally for children and young people from 0 to 25 who have special educational needs and/or disability (SEND). The Local Offer is on the Sefton Website so parents, carers and professionals understand what services they can expect from a range of local agencies, it includes statutory entitlements, eligibility and referral criteria. The Local Offer also makes clear what is available from early years settings, schools (including Academies and Free Schools), colleges and other services including those from health and social care.

An Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) can:

- Offer a comprehensive summary of a child's learning and SEND needs, encompassing diagnoses, relevant home circumstances, and life experiences. (This understanding should also be developed at the SEN Support level by the SENCO, with all teachers aware of the child's needs within the school.)
- Specify a school capable of implementing the plan and meeting the child's needs. This is determined by sharing the plan with potential settings, which review it and confirm whether they can meet the child's needs in line with a legal framework.
- Provide clear guidance on appropriate interventions and support strategies that settings should use to effectively support the child's needs.
- Detail the special educational provisions required to enable the child to make progress. It's worth noting that not all plans will necessitate additional funding from the local authority to meet the young person's requirements.
- Ensure the plan is reviewed regularly during the annual EHCP review meeting, led by the SENDCo.

An Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) can't:

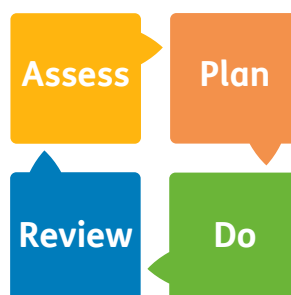
It's important to remember that most children with EHCPs are successfully supported within mainstream schools, which cater to their needs effectively. While parents have the opportunity to express a preference for the type of setting they believe is best suited for their child, the final decision ensures careful consideration of a range of factors to determine the most appropriate setting for the child's development and well-being.

Criteria and Thresholds – There are statutory expectations placed on LAs when deciding to assess for EHCP – have these been met?

Has the young person had access to all relevant resources available from their educational setting, including universal & targeted health services and social care input?

See [An introduction to Graduated Approach](#)

Are there measures of any impact that this support has or has not had over a sustained period of time (approximately 2 terms)? The assess, plan, do, review cycle which will be evidenced in SEND support Plans.



Is there evidence of a CYP with significantly greater need than others of the same age?

We try not to compare children – but what milestones would you expect a child to have achieved at the age they are at – how far behind are they and in how many areas?

Attainment data – are they below expected / expected/above expected in any areas?

Have assessments been completed? (this can include both academic and well-being assessments).

Have the school got a log of behaviour incidents?

What other data is being used by the setting to track a child's progress?

Has the educational setting sought advice from external professionals? Educational Psychologist (EP), Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Specialist Teachers, Health, Inclusion Team.

If no - why not? Remember that a thorough assessment can be a significant process. There are many evidence-based interventions that a school can use as part of their graduated approach before involving an external professional. However, if progress is limited or there is need for a specialist perspective, the school may request assessment and/or support from external professionals. These professionals can offer specific skills, programmes, interventions and perspectives.

If yes: Has the setting followed an Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycle with targets set based upon advice received? (A rough guide is a minimum of 2 terms) What has the impact been?)

Remember an assessment is not summative but formative and should change support to see if a child can benefit from a different approach.

Stages of Action

Graduated Approach Flow Chart

Most children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) will have their needs met within local mainstream schools. Some children and young people may require an Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment for the local authority to decide whether it is necessary for it to make provision in accordance with an EHC plan. This should be requested where the provision cannot reasonably be provided from the resources normally available to mainstream settings. In most cases the setting should have already implemented the support available from its own resources.

For Graduated Approach Provision Maps [Provision Grids](#)

The Graduated Approach provision maps are an important resource as they give a clear and concise overview of provision available with links to further information and resources.



If a child with a social care involvement is reported to be struggling in school there are multiple layers of graduated approach that should be followed before EHC needs assessment is considered. It is essential that all professionals in Children's Services are knowledgeable and accurate in the professional conversations they are having, so that they understand there is a range of support that is available and can explain this to parents.

The child has had multiple school moves, and/or missed a significant amount of school, and/or has experienced ACEs.

There may be an underlying need.

The child has a diagnosed special need, or a suspected special need, which is not currently being met as they are not making progress at school.

Ask the SENCo questions... Has the graduated approach been followed?

Is the child on the SEN register? (K – SEN Support) Is there a SEN plan in place at the school, all children on the SEN register (K) should have a termly review of the support that is in place. (Is there evidence of assess, plan, do, review cycle?)

No

Talk to the SENCo and discuss the graduated approach – is there evidence that the child's is not making expected progress in school? What interventions can they offer to support the child to make progress? Is the child on the SEN register?

Further advice and guidance available:
[SEN support plans](#)

Yes

Talk to the SENCo and seek their professional views on an EHC assessment.

Advise/support parents in engaging with meetings with the SENDCo and other professionals in school about the SEN Support that is in place.

Refer to the Local Authority's Local Offer – a statutory area of the Sefton website offering information about what is offered to support children with SEND

[Local Offer - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities | The Sefton Directory](#)

After approximately 2 terms of graduated approach is the child starting to make progress? Are their educational needs are being met?

No

Talk to the SENCo and seek their professional views on an EHC assessment. Be careful when discussing with parents and avoid suggesting that the child will or should get an EHCP. Always consider what the impact of an EHCP will be.

The EHC Assessment Process is found on the Local Offer: [Education, Health and Care Assessment and Plans \(EHC\) | The Sefton Directory](#)

Yes

Child's needs are being met through the graduated approach. No EHC assessment is required at this stage.

