

## Overview

Although the four broad categories of need will be used, the local authority recognises that there is a wide spectrum of special educational needs which are frequently interrelated. However, threshold guidelines have been set for each category of need, although reference can be made to more than one category of need.

In some circumstances, it is possible for a combination of slightly less severe special needs to have a cumulative effect on a child/young person's educational progress. An EHC Needs Assessment will be considered if the cumulative effect may call for special provision which cannot reasonably be provided within the resources normally available to mainstream settings/schools/colleges in the area.

### Exceptional arrangements for children/young people who need a “Fast Track” to an EHC Needs Assessment

**In very exceptional circumstances a “Fast Track” to an EHC Needs Assessment will need to be considered where a graduated response has not been followed.**

“Fast Tracking” would be considered for:

- Children/young people who have arrived in the country recently and have severe and complex needs.
- Children/young people who have a severe, long-lasting and urgent need arising from a sudden deterioration or onset of a medical condition or accident.
- Children/young people whose families have chosen not to access the relevant services.

Where a child is looked after, the local authority might also agree that an EHC Needs Assessment is required urgently to secure appropriate educational provision.

## Cognition and Learning

The majority of children/young people with profound multiple learning difficulties and severe learning difficulties will be identified at the pre school-stage and their needs met early. Children/young people with learning difficulties may also have additional needs, e.g. speech and language delay or problems interacting with others.

### Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties

Evidence must show severe difficulties in some of the following areas:

- Profound and multiple learning difficulties often with associated physical disabilities.
- Developmental level remaining at 0 – 18 months.
- Extremely limited communication skills.
- Possible severe challenging behaviours/habit disorders.
- High level of personal, social and medical dependency.
- Continuing to work at pre National Curriculum programmes of study.

### Severe Learning Difficulties

Evidence must show some difficulties in the following areas:

- Severe learning difficulties coupled with a specific severe communication/language disorder which is not solely the product of developmental delay.
- Language/communication difficulties significantly worse than cognitive ability where child/young person does not have profound and multiple learning difficulties.

- Level of global ability cannot be validly or reliably measured though some quotients/scores may be available for certain abilities.
- Generally likely to remain at early levels of development but with some instances of better performance.
- Will have associated challenging behaviours.
- After entry to school will be mainly functioning below National Curriculum Year 1 programme of study.

This chart shows threshold indicators for severe learning difficulties:

Age of Pupil	Year Group	Guidance for learning difficulties
0 – 3	Early Years/Foundation	0 – 11 months
3 – 4	Early Years/Foundation	0 – 11, 8 – 20 months
4 – 5	Early Years/Foundation	16 – 26, emerging/developing 22-36 months
5 and 6	Year 1	P Level 2 / 3
7 and 8	Year 2 / Year 3	P Level 3 / 4 or below
9 and 10	Year 4 / Year 5	P Level 4 / 5 or below
11	Year 6	P Level 6 or below
12 and 13	Year 7 / Year 8	P Level 7 or below
14	Year 9	P Level 8 or below
15	Year 10	Working within Year 1 National Curriculum or below
16	Year 11	Working within Year 1 National Curriculum or below
17	Year 12	Working within Year 1 National Curriculum or below
18	Year 14	Working within Year 1 National Curriculum or below
19	Year 15	Working within Year 1 National Curriculum or below

Schools/colleges are generally expected to meet the needs of those children/young people with identified moderate or specific learning difficulties through the range of provision available to schools/colleges without an EHC Needs Assessment or EHC Plan being necessary.

## Communication and Interaction

In all cases submitted for statutory assessment there must be clear multi-professional evidence, including speech and language therapy assessment, that the child/young person's speech or language impairment may, if appropriate action is not taken, have a marked impact on social interaction, independence, achievement in the curriculum or behaviour/ emotion. Reports from a speech and language therapist must provide evidence of the degree of difficulty a child/young person is experiencing.

## Profound Language and Communication Difficulties

Evidence must show severe difficulties in some of the following areas:

- Profound language and communication disorders as a result of which the child/young person is only likely to function below the 12 month level in relation to these skills.
- Is likely to function well within the sensory-motor infant range in relation to communication.
- Uses primitive gestures, a few signs/symbols and/or has a limited functional vocabulary.
- Is unable to form words or make adequate use of augmentative forms of communication due to cognitive inability.
- Has severe limitations in the expression of intentional communication.
- Will be working at pre National Curriculum programmes of study.

## Severe language and communication difficulties

Evidence must show severe difficulties in some of the following areas:

- Severe expressive/receptive language difficulties and/or communication disorder of a specific nature.
- There will be a difference between verbal and non verbal ability.
- Ability to express him/herself is severely limited and requires use of an augmentative/alternative means of communication.
- Ability to receive communication is severely limited due to a language disorder or a severe difficulty in interpersonal interaction.
- The ability to communicate coherently is extremely limited due to interpersonal problems.
- Information usually needs simplification and repetition.
- Limited use of grammatical features.
- Word order difficulties.
- Most utterances are affected by word retrieval difficulties.
- Severely limited range of vocabulary.
- Incoherent and/or unintelligible to strangers but can be understood by the family most of the time.

## Autistic Spectrum Condition/Social Communication Difficulties

Children/young people with Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) will have difficulty in making sense of the world in the way others do. It is expected that children with severe autism are normally identified at the pre-school stage and their needs addressed early.

The severity of social and learning impairments vary along a spectrum or continuum, but a triad of impairment is considered essential for a diagnosis as follows:

- Difficulty with social interaction.
- Difficulty in social communication.
- Difficulty in imaginative thinking.

These three areas of difficulty are often accompanied by a limited, narrow repetitive pattern of activities and children/young people with ASC/Social Communication Difficulties may become obsessed with particular objects or behaviours, focusing on them to the exclusion of everything else. There are often sensory and perceptual difficulties.

Evidence must show significant difficulties in some of the following areas. There must be clearly recorded evidence that some or all of these difficulties are having a marked impact on progress in the curriculum and/or their ability to take part in classroom activities and participate in aspects of school/college life.

### Impairment of social interaction

- Profound or severe difficulties in social interaction, social communication and imaginative thought.
- Limited understanding of body language and gesture.
- Unable to achieve relationships with peers and adults independently.
- Socially isolated.
- Lack of empathy/difficulties in understanding emotions in others.
- Difficulty learning in groups.
- Passive and unresponsive or displays difficult and demanding behaviour which may include aggression towards adults, peers and property.

## Impairment of communication skills

- Profound or severe impairment of communication skills.
- Communication skills require support from a range of methods e.g PECs.
- Limited receptive and/or expressive language.
- Difficulty in expressing thoughts and feelings.
- Immediate or delayed echolalia.
- Stereotyped and repetitive use of language.
- Impairment of imaginative thinking.
- Profound or severe impairment of imaginative thinking.
- Severe difficulty in flexible thought/resistance to change.
- Repetitive and obsessive behaviour.
- Severe lack of ability to engage in symbolic and creative play.
- Severely restricted repertoire of activities and interests.

## Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties

For children/young people with significant social, emotional and mental health difficulties, there should be a marked discrepancy between their attainment in core subjects of the National Curriculum and the expectations for them as assessed by teachers, external specialists and parents/carers

The evidence must show severe difficulties in some of the following areas:

- Extremely poor social skills, including difficulty with peers.
- Very low levels of self-esteem.
- Persistently high levels of violence/disruptive behaviour in the classroom.
- Very limited concentration skills and organisational abilities.
- Severe social, emotional and mental health difficulties which manifest themselves across a range of settings.

In addition there should be evidence of some of the following:

- Frequent, inappropriate challenging of authority.
- Demonstrates a very negative attitude to school in general.
- Frequent provocation of or confrontation with adults.
- Violent or severely disruptive behaviour which is not confined to a particular teacher, class, task or set of circumstances.
- Frequent, aggressive or violent acts against people and/or property.
- Self-harming.
- Child/young person expresses no emotion and appears withdrawn, depressive or has suicidal attitudes.
- Sexually explicit play/behaviour.
- May have difficulty communicating either verbally or non verbally.

## Sensory/physical and/or medical needs

### Hearing Difficulties

Children/young people with a severe/profound hearing impairment are likely to be identified at the pre-school stage and their needs met early. Hearing impairment describes a continuum of difficulty with widely differing implications for a child/young person's communication and access to learning.

Severe/Profound hearing loss may affect a child/young person in some of the following areas:

- Communication interaction (attention and concentration).
- Speech discrimination.
- Speech intelligibility.
- Comprehension.
- Expression.
- Independence.
- Interpersonal skills.
- Curriculum access.
- Attainment.
- Social inclusion.

Evidence may include:

- A significant discrepancy between language abilities and other abilities.
- Severe/profound difficulties with spoken and written comprehension, and with communicating thoughts and feelings to others.
- Specific examples of the hearing impairment placing the child/young person under significant stress, with associated withdrawn or frustrated behaviour.
- Severe language and communication difficulties requiring an augmentative system of communication.
- Severe/profound hearing loss resulting in a need to use alternative methods of communication e.g. Sign Supported Speech.
- Cognitive development may be affected due to language difficulties.
- Intensive involvement from the Sensory and Physical Teaching Service.

### **Visual Difficulties**

Children/young people with a severe / profound visual impairment are likely to be identified at the pre-school stage and their needs met early.

Severe / profound visual difficulties take many forms with widely differing implications for a child/young person's education. In some cases the severe / profound visual impairment is one aspect of multiple disabilities. Whatever the cause of the child/young person's visual impairment, the major issue in identifying and assessing the child/young person's SEND will relate to the degree and nature of functional vision and the child/young person's ability to adapt socially and psychologically, as well as to progress in an educational context.

Severe / profound visual impairment may affect a child/young person in some of the following areas:

- Adapted materials.
- Concept development.
- Communication (verbal and non verbal).
- Visual skills and strategies.
- Mobility skills.
- Orientation skills.
- Interpersonal skills.
- Independence.
- Curriculum access.
- Attainment.
- Social and emotional development.

Evidence may include:

- Severely under or partially developed visual skills.
- Intensive involvement from the Sensory and Physical Teaching Service.
- Specific examples of the severe / profound visual impairment placing the child/young person under significant stress, with associated withdrawn or frustrated behaviour.
- Profound visual loss leading to delays in the maturation in social and physical skills and emotional development.
- Overall cognitive development delayed due to profound visual difficulties.
- A low level of development in independent learning.
- Significant difficulties with visual perception.

## Physical/Medical Needs/Difficulties

Children/young people with severe physical disabilities are normally identified at the pre-school stage and their needs met early. A severe physical impairment may affect a child/young person in any or all of the following areas:

- Perceptual skills.
- Fine motor skills.
- Mobility.
- Communication.
- Independence.
- Interpersonal skills.
- Curriculum access.
- Curriculum attainment.
- Emotions and frustrations / social inclusion.

Evidence may include:

- Severe significant difficulties with spoken and written comprehension, and with communicating thoughts and feelings to others.
- Specific examples of the severe physical impairment placing the child/young person under significant stress, with associated withdrawn or frustrated behaviour.
- Profound and multiple learning difficulty / severe physical difficulties impacting on fine and gross motor skills, mobility, functional independence.
- Very restricted level of cognitive functioning.
- Severe language impairment and significant language difficulties.
- Associated challenging behaviours/habit disorders.