A Graduated Approach to supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Principles and Process

April 2017
Overview

About this Guidance

- **The SEND Code of Practice 2015 defines the Graduated approach as:** A model of action and intervention in early education settings, schools and colleges to help children and young people who have special educational needs. The approach recognises that there is a continuum of special educational needs and that, where necessary, increasing specialist expertise should be brought to bear on the difficulties that a child or young person may be experiencing.

- Buckinghamshire’s Graduated Approach sets out the differing ways by which all children and young people’s Special Educational Needs and disabilities and aspirations may have their needs met, not just those children with statements of special educational need or Education, Health and Care Plans.

- It aims to ensure all children and young people receive an appropriate education, one that is appropriate to their needs, promotes high standards and the fulfilment of potential.

- Ensuring a high quality of life and education is at the centre of Buckinghamshire’s commitment to children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities and is set out in Buckinghamshire’s Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy (2017-2021).

- Buckinghamshire’s Graduated Approach sets out principles and provides key information and guidance on how high quality educational outcomes for all children and young people can be achieved. Key to the success of all children is timely and effective intervention from a range of partner agencies working in a consistent and coherent way in partnership with each other.

- This document should be read in conjunction with the Early Years, School Age and Post 16 Intervention Guidance Documents.

Who is this Guidance for?

- Parents and carers
- Children and young people
- Educational, health and social care professionals
- All education settings
What is the purpose of this Guidance?
- To provide an introduction to Buckinghamshire’s Graduated Approach for supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- To outline requirements and expectations for all supporting and educating children and young people with a SEND.

Definitions
Set out below are the definitions of words / phrases used in this guidance document:

Key Principles of the SEND Code of Practice: The importance of involving children and young people and their families
- The ‘person-centred’ principles on which the Graduated Approach is based include that:
  - The views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person must be taken into account.
  - Their parents / carers’ views must be taken into account.
  - The child or young person and their parents / carers must be able to participate as fully as possible in decision making.
  - They must be provided with the necessary information and support to enable participation in decisions.
  - The child or young person, and their parents / carers, must be supported to help the child or young person to reach the best possible educational and other outcomes, preparing them effectively for adulthood.

The Children and Families Act 2014: Special Educational Needs and Special Educational Provision
- A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.
- 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
- For children aged two or more, special educational provision is educational or training provision that is additional to or different from that made generally for other children or young people of the same age by mainstream schools, maintained nursery schools, mainstream post-16 institutions or by relevant early years providers. For a child under two years of age, special educational provision means educational provision of any kind.
• A child under compulsory school age has special educational needs if he or she is likely to fall within the definition above when they reach compulsory school age or would do so if special educational provision was not made for them (Section 20 Children and Families Act 2014).

• 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’.

Outcomes

• An outcome is the benefit or difference made to an individual as a result of an intervention. It should be personal and not expressed from a service perspective; it should be something that those involved have control and influence over, and while it does not always have to be formal or accredited, it should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound (SMART). When an outcome is focused on education or training, it will describe what the expected benefit will be to the individual as a result of the educational or training intervention provided. Outcomes are not a description of the service being provided – for example the provision of three hours of speech and language therapy is not an outcome. In this case, the outcome is what it is intended that the speech and language therapy will help the individual to do that they cannot do now and by when this will be achieved.

Best endeavours

• Every school is required to identify and address the SEN of the pupils that they support. Mainstream schools must use their best endeavours to make sure that a child with SEN gets the support they need – this means doing everything they can to meet children and young people’s SEN

Timely and integrated support and a ‘person-centred’ approach

• The earliest identification of special educational needs is likely to happen within the ‘universal’ sector, e.g.: services and provision that are available to all children and young people within the community. Typically, those people who might be involved include parents / carers, educators including early years practitioners, school teachers and college tutors, universal health care services including health advisors and doctors and those providing voluntary / independent provision and services including out of school and holiday activities.

• This Guidance aims to help all those involved through the options for support and related process; to access the tools to assist identification and provide early and timely support for special educational needs in line with our strategic vision for all children and young people.

• The process of identification of special educational needs begins with those closest to the child or young person.
• In line with Sections 9:21-9:26 of the SEND Code of Practice (2015) effective ‘person-centred’ approach should:

- focus on the child / young person as an individual
- enable children and young people and their parents / carers to express their views, wishes and feelings
- enable children and young people and their parents / carers to be part of the decision-making process
- be easy for children, young people and their parents / carers to understand, and use clear ordinary language and images rather than professional jargon
- highlight the child or young person’s strengths and capabilities
- enable the child or young person, and those that know them best to say what they have done, what they are interested in and what outcomes they are seeking in the future
- tailor support to the needs of the individual
- organise assessments to minimise demands on families
- bring together relevant professionals to discuss and agree together the overall approach, and
- deliver an outcomes-focused and co-ordinated plan for the child or young person and their parents / carers

• To help with this it will be useful to:

- identify an agreed lead practitioner
- coordinate information and formal assessment information
- agree clearly specified outcomes
- coordinate the resources / organisation required
- agree specified approaches and interventions…
- …that are bespoke and draw on a range of potential sources
- work out costs with clearly identified risks / benefits
- develop an Action plan containing ‘SMART’ targets within available resources
Lead practitioner
- A role that is especially important when the support for a child or young person is being considered for ‘Early SEN Support’ and / or ‘Continuing SEN Support’.
- The ‘lead practitioner’ should be the person who is most involved with the child and young person and who is in the best possible position to coordinate and oversee the planning, implementation and review.
- As required, the ‘lead practitioner’ will oversee arrangements relating to the ongoing development and implementation of an ‘SEND Support Plan’ in line with requirements and expectations (see below).

Professional assessment
- In line with sections 6:1-6:62 of the SEN Code of Practice, the Graduated Approach recognises that assessments may be undertaken by a wide range of qualified professionals and start with those working most closely on a day to day basis with the child or young person and their parent / carer. Where external professionals are involved or it is deemed necessary to involve them, assessments should typically be accessed without the need for a formal assessment for an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- Equally, the provision of support at the ‘Universal’ and ‘Early Support’ tiers should not require a formal diagnosis.
- There will be a need for additional and ongoing training and support for teachers and leaders in settings to assist with the process of discerning needs.

High quality teaching: ‘Quality First Teaching’
- High quality teaching that is differentiated and personalised will meet the individual needs of the majority of children and young people. Some children and young people need educational provision that is additional to or different from this. This is special educational provision under Section 21 of the Children and Families Act 2014. Early years practitioners, settings, schools and colleges must use their best endeavours to ensure that such provision is made for those who need it. Special educational provision is underpinned by high quality teaching and is compromised by anything less.

Differentiation
- Differentiation is defined by the Training and Development Agency for Schools as ‘the process by which differences between learners are accommodated so that all students in a group have the best possible chance of learning’. This can include adjusting the task, the verbal support, the pace of delivery, the teaching resources, for example.
Reasonable adjustments

- The aim of reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 is to avoid as far as possible by reasonable means the disadvantage which a disabled student experiences because of their disability.
- Positive steps must be taken to ensure that disabled students can fully participate in the education and other benefits, facilities and services provided for students.

Area Wide Local Offer

- Local authorities in England are required to set out in their Local Offer information about provision they expect to be available across education, health and social care for children and young people in their area who have SEN or are disabled, including those who do not have Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. Local authorities must consult locally on what provision the Local Offer should contain. More information on Buckinghamshire’s Local Offer is available at; https://www.bucksfamilyinfo.org/localoffer.
Requirements and Expectations

- The Graduated Approach sets out how children and young people should be effectively supported across a continuum of education provision, starting with a high quality whole school or setting approach.

A ‘tiered’ approach to supporting improving outcomes for all children and young people with special educational need:

- Whilst this document describes the principles and processes underpinning effective Graduated Approach, reference should also be made to the relevant following supporting documents:
  - Early Years Intervention Guidance
  - School age Intervention Guidance
  - Post 16 Intervention Guidance

1. – Tier one: ‘Universal’ support – ensuring the best outcomes for all

- Buckinghamshire’s approach starts with high quality, appropriately differentiated education provision, encompassing high aspirations and expectations for children and young people, ‘universally’ provided for all.

- Effective support of special educational needs is commonly met by universal provision available to all children and young people without a referral. Key people, services and provisions should work effectively in partnership together to:
  - clearly identify and prioritise areas of need,
  - implement appropriate intervention
  - review outcomes and progress.

- Universal support should provide the opportunity for the child or young person, their parents / carers to express their views and aspirations in order to better assess and intervene at the earliest possible stage of identification.

- Effective universal support of special educational needs within the whole school / setting and should typically include high quality teaching, reasonable adjustment and effective differentiation, including appropriate transition planning (see Section 6 of the SEND Code of Practice, 2015).

- It is envisaged that the majority of children and young people with special educational needs will achieve expected progress with the effective provision of universal support.
2. – Tier Two: ‘Early SEN Support’ – A ‘Person-centred’ approach to improving outcomes for all children and young people

- Where a child or young person identified with SEN does not make expected progress in receipt of ‘Universal’ education provision, the main practitioner involved in providing the support should meet with the child / young person and their parent(s) / carer(s) to complete a ‘SEND Support Plan’ or equivalent (e.g.: IEP; Provision Map). The ‘SEND Support Plan’ is an individualised summary document recording SEND provision, outcomes and progress against these outcomes. The SEN Support Plan template can be found here: SEND Support Plan

- The ‘SEND Support Plan’ allows those who know the child or young person help determine the best support required. Through this process, the most appropriate advice, support and training can be identified and put in place to ensure best outcomes.

- It will be at this point in the process that consideration should be given to placing the child or young person’s details on the setting’s SEN register, census or other equivalent records.

- It is recognised that the adults with the closest relationship to the child or young person, and who regularly come into contact with them in a supporting capacity, are best placed to provide the greatest benefit or difference to the child or young person’s educational outcomes. A key principle of the Graduated Approach is to ensure, wherever possible, those individuals and groups receive as much training, advice and support as possible in order for them to achieve this.

- This principle is summarised in the ‘Zone of Influence and Accountability’ (National Association of Special Educational Needs), and the diagram below shows how the relationships between external and / or ‘visiting’ professionals, setting-based staff and adults and the child and their parents / carers:
The ‘zone of influence and accountability (NASEN)’

- Child or young person, their family
- Teaching staff
- External support*

*including Local Authority (e.g.: Educational Psychology; Youth Services), Teaching Schools, Academy Trust, Bucks Learning Trust (Early Years’ Service and Specialist Teaching Service), Local SENCO Liaison Groups, Voluntary Organisations, Health Trusts.
The development of an ‘SEND Support Plan’ should follow the ‘person-centred’ principles set out on page 5.

What the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice (CoP) 2015 says:

Teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class, including where pupils access support from teaching assistants or specialist staff (Section 6:36).

Furthermore, Section 6:44 of the Code of Practice 2015 states that:

‘Where a child or young person is identified as having Special Educational Needs, schools and educational settings should take action to remove barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place. The SEND Support Plan should take the form of a 4-part cycle through which earlier decisions and actions are revisited, refined and revised with growing understanding of the child and young person’s needs and of what supports their good progress and helps to secure good outcomes for them (Section 6:44).

An effective ‘SEND Support Plan’ should follow a clearly defined ‘Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR)’ process. The SEND Support Plan should be a record of how outcomes for a child or young person have been identified and how specific actions have been implemented, reviewed and refined over time in order to achieve those outcomes.

Figure 1 below provides an example of the ‘Assess, Plan, Do, Review’ process:
FIGURE 1 – The ‘Assess, Plan, Do, Review’ process:

This form is designed to be used flexibly to meet the needs of your setting and the individual child you are using it for, but below is some guidance about how it could be used.

Name: 
Key Worker: 
Date of review: 
Date of Birth: 
Date: 
Review No.: 

Assess - what you know about the child’s skills

Review - evaluations of what you planned and did

Plan - small targets you are planning to work on

Do - the ‘who, what when and how of the plan’

The child

Following the review, further assessments should be made and the cycle should start again. Liaison with all involved with the child should continue.

Prior to completing the form you should have collated observations and assessments to inform the APDR process.

Details of what you do on a regular basis should be recorded (i.e. on the evaluation sheet). Liaison between practitioners is important and tweaks to the APDR can be made if appropriate.

You should be discussing your observations and assessments with the child’s parents and other practitioners and getting their views. You should use these to prioritise your ‘plans’.

Your APDR, should be shared with parents and relevant practitioners to ensure the outcomes you are working on are consistently focused on. For some outcomes a whole setting approach will be vital.
The SEND Support Plan should be written by early years practitioners, education setting staff with the child and young person, their parents / carers, and any other professionals previously involved to support the child or young person at the ‘Universal’ tier (e.g.: therapy services). Typically, one full cycle of the SEN Support Plan might be undertaken with a 6 week or half-termly period.

‘Early SEN Support’ is proportionate and does not necessarily rely on additional or repeated assessment. It is to be used where a child or young person’s SEND may require support in addition to that which is universally available within the education setting and may include use of delegated High Needs Block funding and / or Pupil Premium (Guidance Doc hyperlinks).

An ‘SEND Support Plan’ may be informed by additional advice and information via SEND Support Plan.

The ‘SEND Support Plan’ may focus on areas of need that are broader than those displayed within the education setting, including medical, sensory, social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing. All such needs may impact on a child and young person’s learning and development within an education setting.

It may be necessary to further review and refine the outcomes set as an ‘SEND Support Plan’ progresses. The ‘SEND Support Plan’ should be reviewed several times over an agreed timescale with all evidence relating to the targets and outcomes clearly recorded.

At any point during the process of ‘Assess, Plan, Do, Review’ children and young people may make progress and achieve their specified outcomes. This may enable the amount of support and intervention to decrease, for example, Early Support for SEND may lead to effectively planned ‘Universal’ support.

3. –Tier Three: ‘Continuing SEN Support’

- After a ‘SEND Support Plan’ has been reviewed and refined over a number of cycles as part of the Early Support for SEND process (or if such a tier of intervention is clearly insufficient to meet needs and deliver outcomes), it may be deemed necessary that further and wider advice and support, beyond that available at the Universal tier is appropriate.
- ‘Continuing SEN Support’ can be provided by a range of other professionals and agencies depending on the specific context and needs of the child and young person.
- ‘Continuing SEN Support’ should not be seen as a ‘new’ or additional form or process. Continuing assessment, advice and support can be incorporated into existing SEND Support Plans (if one exists) as part of the ongoing review and refinement process.
- Those services requested to become involved in supporting the SEND Support Plan will be contacted and may visit or discuss with the early years practitioners, education setting and parents / carers their possible involvement or contribution. This process may start with the Lead Practitioner contacting specific services directly and / or attending an ‘Early Years Liaison Group’ or ‘School SENCO Forum’ to discuss their concerns with the range of professionals present. If it is deemed that further involvement, in the form of consultation and / or assessment and intervention, is required then all necessary consent will be
sought and referral forms completed prior to their engagement.

- Again, at any point during the process of ‘Assess, Plan, Do, Review’, children and young people may make progress and achieve their specified targets and outcomes. This may enable the amount of support and intervention to decrease, for example, ‘Continuing SEN Support’ may lead to effectively planned ‘Early SEN Support’.

**When to request an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment**

- In order to assist the local authority in its decision making, relevant, purposeful intervention via ‘Continuing Support for SEND’ should typically be evidenced to include details regarding the assessment, drafting, implementation and review of an SEN Support Plan incorporating four cycles of ‘Assess, Plan, Do, Review’ at tier three ‘Continuing SEN Support’. In many, but not all cases, these details should cover at least two terms, including how delegated or additional funding or resources have been implemented.
- Many children and young people with the most severe and complex Special Educational Needs and Disabilities will be identified before statutory school age. However, others may not have their needs identified until later.
- For those children and young people with complex needs it is not expected that they will have to pass through each “tier” of the Approach.
- Details of local arrangements and policies relating to Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments may be found at [Buckinghamshire’s Local Offer EHCP Section](#).

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**Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment – what the law says:**

- A request for a local authority in England to secure an EHC needs assessment for a child or young person may be made to the authority by the child’s parent, the young person or a person acting on behalf of a school or post-16 institution. *(Section 36 (1), Children and Families Act 2014)* Where, despite the school or setting having taken relevant and purposeful action to identify, assess and meet the special educational needs of the child, the child has not made expected progress, the school or setting should consider requesting an Education, Health and Care needs assessment. *(SEND Code of Practice 2015)*
- The legal test for an EHC needs assessment is
  - The local authority must secure an EHC needs assessment for the child or young person if, after having regard to any views expressed and evidence submitted under subsection (7), the authority is of the opinion that—
    - (a) the child or young person has or may have special educational needs, and
    - (b) it may be necessary for special educational provision to be made for the child or young person in accordance with an EHC plan. *(Section 36 (8), Children and Families Act 2014)*
Additional Resources

School Funding - High Needs Block Funding

- It is expected that most children and young people will have their needs met within setting’s existing resources, however settings may request High Needs Block Funding (HNBF) for specific short term targeted interventions to support an individual’s SEN where support is required above the £6,000 delegated funding. HNBF will not be agreed in the first instance for any longer than two academic terms. Should an extension be required, evidence of impact to date must be submitted via ‘Assess, Plan, Do, Review’ processes.

- Requests for an extension to HNBF must be accompanied by provider/school/setting/college evidence of how funding given to date has been used and the impact it has had for the outcomes of the individual. Information supporting how any extension to HNBF will be used must also be provided. The setting should demonstrate that they have taken purposeful, relevant and sustained action to meet the individuals SEN before making a request for additional funding. The setting must clearly detail what the request is for, the cost of this and how the interventions will be measured.

- You can find the template to request the High Needs Block Funding on the Local Offer at the following link: [template to request the High Needs Block Funding](#).

Education, Health and Care Plan

- The local authority funds any educational support within the Education, Health and Care Plan which is over and above the education setting’s delegated resources. If the child/young person moves to a different education setting any allocated funding moves with them.
Other Related Documents

- Buckinghamshire Intervention Guidance for Graduated Approach documents for
  - Early Years
  - School Age
  - Post 16
- BCC SEND Guidance and Information: https://www.bucksfamilyinfo.org/localoffer
- Parent / Carer guidance to children’s learning and development in the EYFS: http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/2015/03/what-to-expect-when-a-parents-guide/
- Non-statutory guide to help inform understanding of child development through the early years: http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2012/03/Early_Years_Outcomes.pdf
- School Age National Curriculum: https://www.gov.uk/national-curriculum/overview
- National Association of Special Educational Needs: http://www.nasen.org.uk/