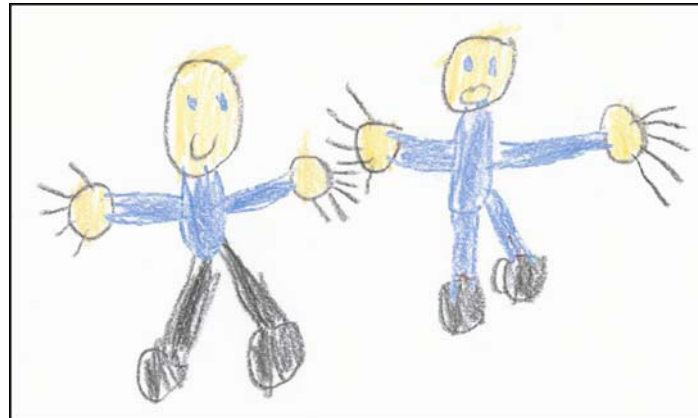


A Graduated Response to Special Educational Needs



A guide to children's characteristics and provision actions in the
Early Years Foundation Stage

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This guidance was developed over a period of time by a wide range of professionals including:

Speech and Language Therapists, Early Years Specialist teachers, Early Years Foundation Stage Advisors, Area SENCOs, Educational Psychologists, Visual Impairment and Hearing Impairment Specialist teachers, Early Years Practitioners and a Nursery School Headteacher

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Liz Hunt: County Senior Educational Psychologist

References

- The Early Years Foundation Stage (2008)
- The Early Support Programme
- The SEN and Disability Act (2002)
- The SEN Code of Practice (2001)
- Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

If you would like a copy of the text of this document in large print, Braille, audio tape or in another language, please call 01223 714752 or email: eycinfo@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Background Information

This document provides guidance to all early year's settings to support planning and decision-making for special educational needs (SEN). It draws on the following key guidance documents.

The Early Years Foundation Stage: *Setting the Standards for Learning, Development and Care for children from birth to five* (Statutory guidance from September 2008)

This is the starting point for practitioners. The Practice Guidance says that:

- “Practitioners must plan for the needs of children.....with learning difficulties or disabilities.

You must plan for each child's individual care and learning requirements. The focus should be on removing or helping to counter underachievement and overcoming barriers for children where these already exist. You should also identify and respond early to needs that could lead to the development of learning difficulties.”

Practice Guidance, page 6, sections 1.7 to 1.10

The Early Years Foundation Stage says that:

- It is important to identify the need for additional support as early as possible. Without it children will not get the help they need at the right time, in the way that is right for them.
- Early support for children includes listening to families and taking part in a sensitive two-way exchange of information.
- For children with the most severe and complex additional support needs you need to plan jointly with everyone who is in contact with the child. This will coordinate support and promote learning as effectively as possible.
- Knowing when and how to call in specialist help is one important element of inclusive practice.

Principles into Practice card 1.2

The Early Support Programme

Early support for children with the most complex needs is supported by **Early Support**. This is the central government's mechanism for providing better co coordinated, family focussed support for children under five with complex needs and disabilities. All practitioners are expected to use the Early Support approach and materials for these children and their families. In Cambridgeshire, there are 3 Early Support Co-ordinators, one in each area. Your local children centre or Early Years Support for Learning Teams can provide contact information. Further information about Early Support Programme can also be found at www.earlysupport.org.uk.

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

Principles into Practice guidance **Observation, Assessment and Planning** highlights the contribution practitioners may need to make to the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for a child in their setting:

- “You may be involved in contributing to the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for a child who has additional needs. The CAF is a standardised assessment which gives a full picture of a child’s additional needs at any stage. It includes information from the child and their parents and covers all aspects of a child’s development including health, education and social development”

Principles into Practice card 3.1

The CAF enables effective communication between the various agencies involved with children who have additional needs, or a child about whom there are concerns. It is being introduced across all agencies that work with children, young people and families and will be implemented in Cambridgeshire by December 2008

The SEN and Disability Act (2002)

The SEN and Disability Act (2002) specifies two key duties for early years settings

- Not to treat disabled children less favourably
- to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ for disabled children

All settings need to regularly review, and where necessary, make changes to their policies to ensure that they do not discriminate against disabled children.

The SEN Code of Practice (2001)

Practitioners must have ‘regard’ to the SEN Code of Practice for all children who have SEN

The SEN Code of Practice emphasises that settings should provide a **graduated response** to meeting children’s SEN. Children who require a graduated response are described in the Code as children who require action that is **additional to** or **different from** the usual range of differentiated activities within the setting.

Courses of action within the graduated response are described by the Code as follows:

- **Early Years Action**
Some additional or different action within the setting will be needed to support the child’s learning.
- **Early Years Action Plus**
This builds on the above but settings will be consulting outside agencies to support their own interventions

- **Statutory Assessment**

This is only appropriate for children with very significant long term educational needs. The SEN of the great majority of children should be met effectively at Early Years Action or Action Plus without the Local Authority needing to make a Statutory Assessment.

The code specifies that children will have needs and requirements which are likely to fall into at least **one or more** of the following **four areas of need**:

- Cognition and Learning
- Behaviour, Emotional and Social development
- Communication and Interaction
- Sensory and/or Physical

Regardless of any specific diagnosis the Code recognizes that there are a wide range of special educational needs that are often inter-related. For example, a child with general learning difficulties may also have emotional difficulties.

Medical Conditions

A medical diagnosis or a disability does not necessarily imply SEN. It may not be necessary for a child or young person with any particular diagnosis or medical condition to need any form of additional educational provision at any phase of education. It is the child's **educational needs** rather than a medical diagnosis that must be considered. Some children may not require school based SEN provision or statements but may have medical conditions that, if not properly managed, could hinder their access to education.

Parent Partnership

The SEN Code of Practice says,

“Partnership with parents plays a key role in promoting a culture of co operation between parents, schools, early years settings, local authorities and others. This is important in enabling children and young people with SEN to achieve their potential. Parents hold key information and have a critical role to play in their children’s education. They have unique strengths, knowledge and experience to contribute to the shared view of a child’s needs and the best ways of supporting them. It is therefore essential that all professionals actively seek to work with parents and value the contribution they make.”

Paragraphs 2:1/2:2

Cambridgeshire Parent Partnership Service is a service for parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs. It promotes positive outcomes for children and young people through partnerships between parents, settings, local authority officers and other agencies. It provides useful information for parents on all matters relating to children’s SEN, and practitioners should make parents of children with SEN aware of this service

The structure of the guidance

This guidance is divided into the four **areas of need** as listed above, that is:-

- Cognition and Learning
- Behaviour, Emotional and Social development
- Communication and Interaction
- Sensory and/or Physical

For each **area of need** there are:

- Descriptors relating to **children's characteristics** at Early Years Action/Early Years Action Plus and Significant and Complex needs
- Descriptors relating to the **provision characteristics** – actions the setting should be making at Early Years Action and Early Years Action Plus.

Children's characteristics

Decisions about a child's level of need should be part of a continuous cycle of planning, action and review within the setting, to help all children to develop, learn and progress. The range, type and intensity of interventions should not be seen as a fixed state but should be changed according to the progress the child makes over time.

When deciding on a child's primary area of need, a good starting point are the General Learning Difficulties descriptors within the area of need - 'Cognition and Learning' (SEN Code of Practice). Based on how these match a child's needs, the other sections of the Guidance should then be consulted.

The descriptors of **children's characteristics** should be read with the following in mind:

- age of the child
- how recently he or she started in an Early Years Setting
- the behaviour and skills of the majority of his/her peers.

However, this should not preclude the possibility of a young child who has recently joined a setting being identified with additional needs that require immediate support at whatever level is appropriate.

When reading the descriptors it should be borne in mind that children may show some or all of the difficulties stated at each level of need. Difficulties at each level of need are expected to be in addition to those at a less severe level.

Provision characteristics

At **Early Years Action** some additional or different action within the setting will be required to enable the child to access independent learning and the curriculum.

Early Years Action Plus builds on the arrangements for Early Years Action to enable settings to match provision to meet children's needs. At this point settings should be consulting outside agencies to support their own interventions with children. Settings must seek parents' permission before consulting any outside agency and tell them in advance when a professional is visiting the setting. They must always share with parents/carers reports produced by professionals. In many instances the professionals will themselves meet with parents/carers.

Early Years Action and Action Plus **provision characteristics** are described under the following **strands of action**.

- **Assessment, planning and review**
- **Parent /carers and child's participation**
- **Curriculum and teaching methods**
- **Additional and other resources**

Deciding on a child's level of need and the action to take

The SEN Code of Practice advises that, whatever a child's level of need and development, **inadequate progress** should be the key test of whether to take **additional** or **different** action. **It warns, however, that there should be no assumption that all learners will progress at the same rate; there needs to be judgement in each case about what it is reasonable to expect the child to achieve.**

The Code defines "adequate" progress as, for example, progress which:

- Closes the attainment gap between the child and their peers;
- Prevents the attainment gap growing wider;
- Is similar to that of peers starting from the same attainment baseline, but less than the majority of peers;
- Matches or betters the child's previous rate of progress;
- Ensures access to the full curriculum;
- Demonstrates an improvement in self-help, social or personal skills;
- Demonstrates improvements in the child's behaviour.

Paragraph 4:14

Assessment is set within the context of the Early Years Foundation Stage. To help you with this the following summary sheet may be used.

1 level below chronological age: Early Years Action
 2 levels below chronological age: Early Years Action Plus

	Communication, Language and Literacy	Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy	Knowledge and Understanding of the World	Physical Development	Creative Development
40-60 months						
30-50 months						
22-36 months						
16-26 months						
8-20 months						
Birth to 11 months						

COGNITION AND LEARNING: Introduction

“Children who demonstrate features of moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties.....require specific programmes to aid progress in cognition and learning. Some requirements may also apply to some extent to children with physical and sensory impairments and those on the autistic spectrum. Some of these children may have associated sensory, physical and behavioural difficulties that compound their needs.”

The SEN Code of Practice
Paragraph 7:58

General learning difficulties

“Meeting the individual needs of all children lies at the heart of the EYFS”

Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage, paragraph 1.7

- Every child is a unique individual with their own characteristics and temperament.
- Development is a continuous, complex interaction of environmental and genetic factors in which the body, brain and behaviour become more complex.
- Babies and children mature at different rates and at different times in their lives.

Principles into Practice’ card 1.1

It is important to recognise that children with learning difficulties will vary in the nature and severity of their difficulties. They will show a variety of patterns of learning and development.

The SEN Code of Practice advises that, whatever a child’s level of need and development, **inadequate progress** should be the key test of whether to take additional or different action. It warns, however, that there should be no assumption that all learners will progress at the same rate; there needs to be judgement in each case about what it is reasonable to expect the child to achieve. For some children ‘adequate progress’ may mean that the child makes progress that closes the gap between their level of learning and development and their peers. For others, it may mean progress that matches or betters their previous rate of progress.

The triggers for taking Early Years Action could be the parent’s/carer’s, practitioners or other professional’s concern, underpinned by evidence, about a child who fails to make adequate progress despite receiving differentiated learning opportunities.

It is important that practitioners have **appropriately high expectations** for all children’s learning and development.

The tables in the following section detail

- **Graduated Descriptors** for children with general learning difficulties who are 3-4 years (EYFS stage 30-50 months) and 4-5 years (EYFS stage 40-60 months). **Descriptions of children's' characteristics are made with reference to the six EYFS areas of learning and development.**
- **Provision characteristics** for Early Years Action and Early Years Action Plus

General Learning Difficulties Descriptors

Early Year Foundation Stage Children’s Characteristics (30-50 months)

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development	Early Years Action (<i>broadly corresponds to children with development in 22 - 36 months band</i>)	Early Years Action Plus(<i>broadly corresponds to children with development in 16 - 26 months band</i>)	Significant and Complex needs (<i>broadly corresponds to children with development in 8 - 20 months band</i>)
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	May sit independently for a short group activity, where the activity is personally meaningful, e.g. for song- or story-time, snack-time.	May sit independently for a short group activity with some verbal or visual prompts to focus. Additional structure and adult support needed for less intrinsically motivating group activities.	Needs individual adult support to access all activities with purpose or safely, because of level of development. Unable to benefit from group learning opportunities.
	Some awareness of own limitations or possible dangers in the environment, but may compromise the safety of themselves or others at times.	Limited awareness of own limitations or possible dangers in the environment, which may compromise the safety of themselves or others.	
	Needs some adult supervision to access some activities safely, independently, or with purpose.	Needs enhanced adult supervision to access some activities safely, independently, or with purpose.	
Communication, Language and Literacy: Language for Communication & Thinking	Understands up to 200 words.	Understands 50 words or more and is adding one or two new words each week.	Shows understanding of up to 50 names of some common objects (e.g. juice, teddy) by looking at object, pointing to it, when asked by a familiar adult (e.g. ‘Where’s your shoes ?’)
	Shows some understanding of familiar prepositions ‘in’, ‘on’ (e.g. will carry out the action when asked to ‘Put dolly in the house,’ or can select the correct picture).	Picks out 2 or more objects from a group of 4 (e.g. ‘Give me the cup and the doll .’ ‘Where’s the?’) when with a familiar adult.	

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development	Early Years Action (<i>broadly corresponds to children with development in 22 - 36 months band</i>)	Early Years Action Plus(<i>broadly corresponds to children with development in 16 - 26 months band</i>)	Significant and Complex needs (<i>broadly corresponds to children with development in 8 - 20 months band</i>)
	Begins to make little 'sentences' by joining 2 or 3 words together, e.g. "Daddy gone", "Me got one". May produce occasional longer sentences (e.g. 'Mummy go shops now.'). Asks simple questions (e.g. 'Where's Mummy?')	Uses a range of single words or learnt phrases appropriately, and some 'gobbledegook' with mostly appropriate intonation and tone, to convey meaning and attempt to communicate. Some of these may be 'own words' which only familiar adults are able to interpret.	Use of single words and short phrases is limited to those learnt for familiar objects and routines. 'Own words' or sounds may be consistently used in a particular context to convey meaning and attempt to communicate.
Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy	May show some understanding of some mathematical concepts (e.g. recognises 'two' buckets, a circle, and if someone has 'more'). Joins in with rote counting and number rhymes. May recognise a numeral that is particularly important to them (e.g. points to a numeral representing their age or house number and says 'I three!' 'There's four!').	Beginning to say some numbers in rote-learnt ways (e.g. joins in with rhymes involving numbers, says some numbers when adult counts).	Does not show understanding of number concepts or recognition of numerals.
Knowledge and Understanding of the World	Independent play shows some organisation & purpose but this is often limited for their age (e.g. gathers toys together before starting to play, such as fetching a train and some tracks & setting them out to play trains; fills container with sand, empties it into a smaller container and observes over-spill, then repeats action).	Limited purposeful independent play for their age (e.g. briefly relates two or more objects in a purposeful way, such as putting the lid on a teapot; briefly explores properties of materials & items, such as filling a container with bricks, sand, putting rice in a truck, squashing playdough & using a knife or cutter on it).	Independent play is that of a child within the EYFS 0 – 11 or 8 - 20 months bands of development.

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development	Early Years Action (<i>broadly corresponds to children with development in 22 - 36 months band</i>)	Early Years Action Plus(<i>broadly corresponds to children with development in 16 - 26 months band</i>)	Significant and Complex needs (<i>broadly corresponds to children with development in 8 - 20 months band</i>)
	Maintains attention for age-appropriate periods on self-chosen activities. Attention can be focused by adults to complete a short activity with prompts (e.g. matching simple pictures of familiar objects, such as spoon, dog, banana, shoes and so on).	Attention is typically fleeting for adult-led play, so that only part of a short activity can be completed, but sustained for more age-appropriate periods to a limited range of self-chosen activities.	Attention is given only to self-chosen or highly motivating activities.
	Sometimes tries to self-correct without adult prompting, e.g. when attempting to fit inset jigsaw pieces.	Occasionally may try to self-correct without adult prompting, e.g. when attempting to fit inset jigsaw pieces.	Makes no attempts to self-correct, e.g. when attempting to fit inset jigsaw pieces. Needs adult to draw attention to problem and guide solution.
	Imitates & shows they have remembered actions demonstrated by more skilled child or adult.	Sometimes imitates & shows they have remembered actions demonstrated by more skilled child or adult in a familiar, routine context.	Shows no spontaneous imitation & evidence of remembering actions demonstrated by more skilled child or adult. Needs modelling, support, and practice to learn new actions/skills.
Creative Development	Uses one object to represent another in pretend play, especially when objects have characteristics in common, e.g. uses a brick as a car, puts block on a plate as if it were a cake, holds banana as if it were a telephone.	Pretend play is limited to showing understanding of functional use of toy objects, e.g. may put toy telephone to ear, push a toy car with accompanying noises.	Pretend play is limited to showing understanding of functional use of real objects without intentional pretending, e.g. uses a hairbrush, a cup.
	Some play with small-world toys.	Little meaningful play with small-world toys.	
Physical Development	Children will vary in their awareness of bladder or bowel urges, from no awareness to full toileting independence, and may show some delay in their physical development.		

General Learning Difficulties Descriptors

Foundation Stage Children’s Characteristics (40-60 months)

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development	Early Years Action (<i>broadly corresponds to children with development in 30 - 50 months band</i>)	Early Years Action Plus (<i>broadly corresponds to children with development in 22 - 36 months band</i>)	Significant and Complex needs (<i>broadly corresponds to children with development in 16 - 26 months band</i>)
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	May sit independently for a short group activity with some verbal or visual prompts to focus.	May sit independently for a short group activity, where the activity is personally meaningful, e.g. for song- or story-time, snack-time.	Needs individual adult support to access all activities with purpose or safely, because of level of development. Able to benefit from group learning opportunities only with individual support.
	Shows awareness of own limitations and possible dangers in a familiar environment.	Some awareness of own limitations or possible dangers in the environment, but may compromise the safety of themselves or others at times.	
	Needs some preparation and adult support to undertake new activities where there are safety implications. This has implications for undertaking group activities, such as outings.	Needs some adult support to access some activities safely, independently, with purpose.	
Communication, Language and Literacy: Language for Communication & Thinking	Can identify picture or object with three critical elements (e.g. “Find the big girl jumping ,”) when with a familiar adult.	Understands up to 200 words.	Understands approximately 50 words and some phrases. Is adding only a few new words each week.
	Understands prepositions, such as ‘under’, ‘on top’, ‘behind’, ‘next to’ by carrying out action or selecting correct picture.	Shows some understanding of familiar prepositions ‘in’, ‘on’ (e.g. will carry out the action when asked to ‘Put dolly in the house,’ or can select the correct picture).	

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development	Early Years Action (<i>broadly corresponds to children with development in 30 - 50 months band</i>)	Early Years Action Plus (<i>broadly corresponds to children with development in 22 - 36 months band</i>)	Significant and Complex needs (<i>broadly corresponds to children with development in 16 - 26 months band</i>)
	Uses simple statements and questions (typically 3-5 words, e.g. "I got new shoes." "Where Daddy gone?"), which they may support with gestures.	Begins to make little 'sentences' by joining 2 or 3 words together, e.g. "Daddy gone", "Me got one". May produce occasional longer sentences (e.g. 'Mummy go shops now.'). Asks simple questions (e.g. 'Where's Mummy?')	Uses some single words or learnt phrases appropriately, and some 'gobbledegook' with mostly appropriate intonation and tone, to convey meaning and attempt to communicate. Some of these may be 'own words' which only familiar adults are able to interpret.
Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy	Shows some understanding of some number concepts (e.g. recognises groups with one, two or three objects; correctly says which collection has 'more' under some circumstances); uses some number names and number language spontaneously but not always accurately (e.g. recites some numbers in order: 'One, two, three, four, six, ten;'; says 'That's six!' when it's a five).	May show some understanding of some mathematical concepts (e.g. recognises 'two' buckets, a circle, and if someone has 'more'). Joins in with rote counting and number rhymes. May recognise a numeral that is particularly important to them (e.g. points to a numeral representing their age or house number and says 'I three!' 'There's four!').	Beginning to say some numbers in rote-learnt ways (e.g. joins in with rhymes involving numbers, says some numbers when adult counts).
Knowledge and Understanding of the World	Independent play shows organisation & purpose (e.g. builds stories around toys, such as farm animals climbing an armchair 'cliff' & having to be rescued; uses construction materials as a means to an end, such as making a house to be part of a game with toy people or animals).	Independent play shows some organisation & purpose but this is often limited for their age (e.g. gathers toys together before starting to play, such as fetching a train and some tracks & setting them out to play trains; fills container with sand, empties it into a smaller container and observes over-spill, then repeats action).	Limited purposeful independent play for their age (e.g. briefly relates two or more objects in a purposeful way, such as putting the lid on a teapot; briefly explores properties of materials & items, such as filling a container with bricks, sand, putting rice in a truck, squashing playdough & using a knife or cutter on it).

EYFS Areas of Learning and Development	Early Years Action (<i>broadly corresponds to children with development in 30 - 50 months band</i>)	Early Years Action Plus (<i>broadly corresponds to children with development in 22 - 36 months band</i>)	Significant and Complex needs (<i>broadly corresponds to children with development in 16 - 26 months band</i>)
	Maintains attention for age-appropriate period on short adult-directed activities (e.g. will match and sort items according to one characteristic, such as colour, shape, size; sequence three pictures in order to show a familiar activity or story).	Maintains attention for age-appropriate periods on self-chosen activities. Attention can be focused by adults to complete a short activity with prompts (e.g. matching simple pictures of familiar objects, such as spoon, dog, banana, shoes and so on).	Attention is typically fleeting for adult-led play, so that only part of a short activity can be completed, but sustained for more age-appropriate periods to a limited range of self-chosen activities.
	Will self-correct on some activities without adult prompting, e.g. when attempting to fit inset jigsaw or interlocking jigsaw pieces.	Sometimes tries to self-correct without adult prompting, e.g. when attempting to fit inset jigsaw pieces.	Does not typically self-correct without adult prompting, e.g. when attempting to fit inset jigsaw pieces.
	Imitates & shows they have remembered actions demonstrated by more skilled child or adult.	Imitates & shows they have remembered actions demonstrated by more skilled child or adult.	Only imitates & shows they have remembered actions demonstrated by more skilled child or adult in a familiar, routine context.
Creative Development	Beginning to make believe by pretending, e.g. shows sequences of imaginary or role play based on own first hand experiences, such as pretending to pour a cup of tea and give it to someone else to drink.	Uses one object to represent another in pretend play, especially when objects have characteristics in common, e.g. uses a brick as a car, puts block on a plate as if it were a cake, holds banana as if it were a telephone.	Pretend play is limited to showing understanding of functional use of toy objects, e.g. may put toy telephone to ear, push a toy car with accompanying noises. Little meaningful play with small-world toys.
	Plays with small-world toys.	Some play with small-world toys.	
Physical Development	Children will vary in their awareness of bladder or bowel urges, from no awareness to full toileting independence, and may show some delay in their physical development.		

Early Years Action

Assessment, planning and review	Parents'/carers' and child's participation	Curriculum and teaching methods	Resources
<p>Assessment, planning and review may need to take account of the child's attendance at more than one setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting supplements their normal systems of assessment, monitoring and planning by further observation in order to understand child's current interests, development and learning needs (i.e. needs that are additional to or different from what is usually provided for all children within the setting). Observation takes place around different activities and environments within the setting, e.g. outdoor environment, at lunchtime. • Planning of intervention involving the parent/carer, child, setting SENCO, key person. • Individual Child plan (ICP*) drawn up with SMART targets. • Half-termly (approximately 6-weekly) review of child's progress towards targets recorded on the Child Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers contribute to assessment. • Parents/carers give informed written consent for the involvement of external agencies. • Parents/carers invited to participate in ICP target setting, monitoring progress and reviews, and may be involved in supporting targets in the home. • The ascertainable views of the child are taken account of. • Opportunities for parents/carers to learn how to help their child further. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grouping strategies used flexibly to enhance learning and access to the curriculum, and to focus available adult support where needed. • Additional adult attention and/or support for group activities where relevant. • Emphasis on providing an enabling environment both inside and outside, with developmentally appropriate resources, and on differentiation for curriculum access. Possibly some specific reinforcement or skill-development activities in support of ICP targets • Approaches used show acceptance and empathy for the child, support for their emotions, and aims to build positive relationship with them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional adult attention and/or support for some activities, including ICP targets, from practitioners already working in the setting. • Supervision and monitoring of the ICP by SENCO. • One-off advice may be sought from the Early Years Support for Learning Team to inform planning.

**An individual Child Plan (ICP) may take the form of an Individual Education Plan (IEP), Behaviour and/or Care Plan*

Early Years Action Plus

Assessment, planning and review	Parents/carers' and child's participation	Curriculum and teaching methods	Resources
<p>Assessment, planning and review may need to take account of the child's attendance at more than one setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing observation undertaken in order to understand child's current interests, development and learning needs that are additional to or different from what is usually provided for all children within the setting. • Planning of intervention involving the parent/carer, child, setting SENCO, key person, and advising agencies. • Individual Child Plan (ICP*) drawn up with SMART targets, which take account of specialist advice. • Half-termly (approximately 6-weekly) review of child's progress towards targets recorded on the ICP. • Involvement of Support for Learning Team and other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers contribute to assessment. • Parents/carers give informed written consent for the involvement of external agencies. • Parents/carers invited to participate in IEP target setting, monitoring progress and reviews, and may be involved in supporting targets in the home. • The ascertainable views of the child are taken account of. • Opportunities for parents/carers to work in partnership with practitioners and specialist support professionals to share knowledge and develop a consistent approach to developing the child's skills and independence. • Enhanced contact for parents with key person in setting. Contact book or diary might be used to facilitate discussion of activities at home and in setting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grouping strategies used flexibly to enhance learning and access to the curriculum, and to focus available adult support where needed. • Additional adult attention and/or support for group activities. • Access to individually supported activities. This may involve working as part of a small group or one-to-one with an adult on IEP targets • Approaches used show acceptance and empathy for the child, support for their emotions, and aims to build positive relationship with them. • Emphasis on providing an enabling environment both inside and outside, with developmentally appropriate resources, with increased differentiation of curriculum access and materials, to reflect child's developmental and language levels, with key learning outcomes identified 	<p>Advice is sought on an ongoing basis from the Early Years Support for Learning team and informs planning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional adult attention and/or support for some activities, including ICP targets. • Supervision and monitoring of the ICP by SENCO. • Time allocated for key professionals to liaison with external agencies. • Access to ICT and specialist equipment/materials (e.g. scissors, sloping boards, pencil grips) if appropriate. • Space for ICT, individual work, and storage facilities for pupil's specific equipment.

<p>specialists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration given to using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). 		<p>from ICP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased focus on specific activities and/or use of resources, including ICT and specialist equipment/materials/communication techniques, as identified through involvement of external agencies. 	
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**An individual Child Plan (ICP) may take the form of an Individual Education Plan (IEP), Behaviour and/ or Care Plan*

BEHAVIOURAL, EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: Introduction

The SEN Code of Practice says,

“Children who demonstrate features of emotional and behavioural difficulties, who are withdrawn or isolated, disruptive and disturbing, hyperactive and lack concentration: those with immature social skills and those presenting challenging behaviours arising from complex special needs, may require, help in adjusting to school expectations and routines, flexible teaching arrangements, help in acquiring the skills of positive interaction with peers and adults....”

Paragraph 7.60

When children join a setting, they bring with them a set of expectations about how to behave based on their previous experiences at home or in other settings. For most children the transition from home to setting or setting to setting is straightforward and they are quickly able to meet the new setting's expectations of their behaviour without difficulty. Other children will need more specific support to learn the boundaries of acceptable behaviour in a new setting. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) gives guidance on what form that support should take. In particular, you will find the Personal, Social and Emotional Development area of the EYFS useful.

It is important to bear in mind a child's developmental level rather than age when looking at behaviour and expectations. Is the behaviour seen appropriate given their general developmental level? Are there underlying difficulties that result in the child's behaviour? Have you looked at their speech and language needs? Do expectations and responses recognise the child's general developmental levels?

Policies

The EYFS requires that “Providers must have an effective behaviour management policy which is adhered to by all members of staff’ (Statutory Guidance p28) and that there should be a ‘named practitioner... responsible for behaviour management issues’. More specifically it advises that ‘explaining boundaries, rules and limits to children helps them understand why rules exist’ and recommends ‘having consistent boundaries for behaviour at home and in the setting.’ Guidance is also given recommending that adults should ‘empathise with children and support their emotions’.

Practice Guidance cards 1:3 /3:3

The Early Years Support for Learning teams can help you with developing your behaviour/inclusion policy. For most children in the EYFS, consistent application of an appropriate behaviour management policy will be sufficient to bring about successful progress in this aspect of the Personal, Social and Emotional Development Area of Learning. For a few children, additional support will be needed and it is this support which constitutes the setting's response to a child's special educational need at whatever level is appropriate.

Baselines

Behavioural difficulties can generally be characterised as ‘acting out’, where the child’s behaviour is disruptive, and ‘acting in’, where the child becomes withdrawn, and both should be of concern to practitioners, although it is ‘acting out’ that draws attention to itself most readily. The levels of need and characteristics of behaviour tables list the two forms separately. In both cases it is helpful to establish a baseline of behaviour.

Sudden changes of behaviour

Children’s usual patterns of behaviour can change in response to a variety of changes in their circumstances, e.g. the arrival of a new baby; if a member of staff leaves, and this is quite common. However, Practitioners should be aware that sudden changes in a child’s behaviour could be indicative of issues requiring a response under the guidelines for ‘Safeguarding and promoting children’s welfare’ (Statutory Framework for the EYFS, page 22).

Tables

The tables in the following section detail

- **Children’s characteristics** for Early Years Action, Early Years Action Plus and Significant and Complex needs for children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties at 36 to 60 months
- **Provision characteristics** for Early Years Action, Early Years Action Plus

**Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties Descriptors
Early Years Foundation Stage Children's Characteristics (36 – 60 months)**

EYFS Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Early Years Action	Early Years Action Plus	Significant and Complex needs
<i>Dispositions & Attitudes</i>	May be generally fidgety.	May show relatively high levels of activity and distractibility.	Shows unusually high levels of activity and distractibility.
	Can sit in a group for a short story or song time with occasional individual adult verbal prompts.	Can sit in a group for a short story or song time with additional adult focussed attention, e.g. additional adult is required to sit next to child for some of the time.	Unable to sit in a group, or able to do so only with constant, focussed adult attention.
	Can be engaged in adult-directed activities for short periods with individual adult prompts or encouragement.	Needs individual adult attention and intervention to remain engaged in activities of own choice.	Can only fleetingly attend to specifically selected, stimulating and motivating activities with one to one support.
<i>Self-confidence & Self-esteem</i>	Easily becomes frustrated and may display this as tantrums.	Sometimes shows distress or tantrums during session.	Often shows distress or tantrums during session.
	Shows some withdrawn or anxious behaviour. May be shy or passive.	Often withdrawn or anxious, and may frequently be distressed at being left.	

	When playing in the setting, regularly seeks out adults for comfort or reassurance. May sometimes be clingy.	Often reluctant to engage in activities. Requires a familiar adult nearby and can be very clingy.	
<i>Making Relationships</i>	Play and social interaction with others sometimes limited. Brief exchanges with other children, e.g. may try to take toys.	Play and social interaction with others often limited. Often socially excluded by other children.	Play and social interaction with others is limited.
	May be possessive with own toys. May take turns in play in structured activities and share with adult supervision, but little idea of spontaneous sharing.	Generally possessive with toys. Often grabs, snatches toys from other children during a session. Reluctant to share or take turns even with adult supervision and support during most sessions.	Possessive with toys throughout session. Frequently grabs, snatches toys from other children during a session. Very reluctant to share or take turns even with adult supervision and support during most sessions.
<i>Behaviour & Self-control</i>	Sometimes defiant. Reluctant to follow adult directions, but will respond to reasoning with suitable motivator.	Frequently defiant. Often resistant to adult direction during most sessions, but will respond to reasoning/motivator some of the time.	Persistently defiant. Frequent resistance to adult direction each session.
	Can become verbal/physical to others.	Incidents of hurting others, e.g. hitting, kicking, spitting, during most sessions.	Frequent and unpredictable outbursts of physical and verbal aggression each session.
<i>Self-care</i>	May need some additional supervision at times to keep safe within the setting.	Needs additional supervision at times to keep safe within the setting, as poor sense of danger.	Needs constant supervision for protection against dangers.
<i>Sense of Community</i>	Needs individual verbal prompts, praise or meaningful rewards, to follow routines of the day and follow simple instructions.	Often displays behaviour which 'hijacks' or disrupts group learning. Requires individual attention, physical and verbal prompts, and systematic rewards, to follow routines and instructions within the setting.	Actively resists following routines and instructions, even with constant individual attention, physical and verbal prompts, and systematic rewards.

Withdrawn and sometimes needs some individual adult support to encourage and facilitate physical or verbal participation in group sessions.

Withdrawn and often needs some individual adult support to encourage and facilitate physical or verbal participation in group sessions.

Early Years Action

Assessment, planning and review	Parents/carers' and child's participation	Curriculum and teaching methods	Resources
<p>Assessment, planning and review may need to take account of the child's attendance at more than one setting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting supplements their normal systems of assessment, monitoring and planning by further observation in order to understand child's current interests, development and learning needs (i.e. needs that are additional to or different from what is usually provided for all children within the setting). Observation takes place around different activities and environments within the setting, e.g. outdoor environment, at lunchtime. • Using a Behaviour Planning Sheet a baseline recording of frequency & severity of behaviours of concern should be made in order to inform strategies for intervention and evaluation. • Planning of intervention involving the parent/carer, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers contribute to assessment. • Parents/carers give informed written consent for the involvement of external agencies. • Parents/carers invited to participate in planning, target setting, monitoring progress and reviews, and may be involved in supporting targets in the home. • The ascertainable views of the child are taken account of. • Opportunities for parents/carers to work in partnership with practitioners to use a consistent approach to developing child's social, emotional, behavioural skills across both contexts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grouping strategies used flexibly to enhance learning and access to the curriculum, and to focus available adult support where needed. • Group Personal, Social, Emotional Development (PSED) sessions (e.g. circle time) focus on developing social-emotional skills and awareness in relationships with others. • Additional adult attention and/or support for some activities, including targets, from practitioners already working in the setting. • Supervision and monitoring of the ICP by SENCO. • Opportunities provided for child to develop trusting relationship with a particular adult. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-off advice may be sought from the Early Years Support for Learning Team to inform planning. • Staff training needs with regard to children's social, emotional & behavioural development are addressed • Additional adult attention and/or support for some activities, including targets, from practitioners already working in the setting. • Supervision and monitoring of the ICP by SENCO. • Opportunities provided for child to develop trusting relationship with a particular adult.

<p>child, setting SENCO, key person.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individual Child Plan (ICP*) drawn up with SMART targets and at least 6-weekly review of child's progress towards targets recorded on the ICP.			
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**An individual Child Plan (ICP) may take the form of an Individual Education Plan (IEP), Behaviour and/ or Care Plan*

Early Years Action Plus

Assessment, planning and review	Parents/carers' and child's participation	Curriculum and teaching methods	Resources
<p>Assessment, planning and review take account of child's attendance at more than one setting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing observation undertaken in order to understand child's current interests, development and learning needs that are additional to or different from what is usually provided for all children within the setting. • Continued recording of frequency & severity of behaviours of concern is made to inform strategies for intervention and evaluation using Behaviour Planning Sheet • Planning of intervention involving the parent/carer, child, setting SENCO, key person, and advising agencies. • Individual Child Plan (ICP*) drawn up with SMART targets, which take account of specialist advice. • Half-termly (approximately 6-weekly) review of child's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers contribute to assessment. • Parents/carers give informed written consent for the involvement of external agencies. • Parents/carers invited to participate in IEP target setting, monitoring progress and reviews, and may be involved in supporting targets in the home. • The ascertainable views of the child are taken account of. • Opportunities for parents/carers to work in partnership with practitioners and specialist support professionals to share knowledge and develop a consistent approach to developing the child's social, emotional, behavioural skills across both contexts. • Enhanced contact for parents with key person in setting. Contact book or diary might be used to facilitate discussion of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grouping strategies used flexibly to enhance learning and access to the curriculum. • Additional adult attention and/or support for group activities. • Individual or group Personal, Social, Emotional Development (PSED) sessions (e.g. circle time) focus on developing social-emotional skills and awareness in relationships with others. • Approaches used show acceptance and empathy for the child, support for their emotions, and aims to build positive relationship with them. • Emphasis on providing an enabling environment both inside and outside, with developmentally appropriate resources, and increased differentiation of curriculum access and materials, to reflect child's social-emotional and behavioural capacity, with key learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training needs with regard to children's social, emotional & behavioural development are addressed. • Advice is sought on an ongoing basis from the Early Year Support for Learning Team and informs planning. • Practitioners knowledgeable about voluntary agencies / support groups who can give advice/support to parents/carers • Additional adult attention and/or support for some activities, including ICP targets. • Supervision and monitoring of the ICP by SENCO. • Opportunities provided for child to develop trusting relationship with a particular adult. • Commitment to liaison with parents / carers to ensure consistency of approach. • Time allocated for key

<p>progress towards targets recorded on the ICP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input or attendance made by appropriate support professionals to reviews. • Consideration given to using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). 	<p>activities at home and in setting.</p>	<p>outcomes identified from IEP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional focus is given to activities which address the child's difficulties, using specific teaching approaches as necessary (e.g. a structured behaviour support programme), developed in consultation with Early Years Support for Learning Team 	<p>professionals for liaison with external agencies.</p>
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**An individual Child Plan (ICP) may take the form of an Individual Education Plan (IEP), Behaviour and/ or Care Plan*

COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION: Introduction

The SEN Code of Practice says,

“Most children with special educational needs have strengths and difficulties in one, some or all of the areas of speech, language and communication. Their communication needs may be both diverse and complex. They will need to continue to develop their linguistic competence in order to support their thinking as well as their communication. The range of difficulties will encompass children with speech and language delay, impairments and disorders, hearing impairment and those who demonstrate features within the autistic spectrum; they may also apply to children with moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties. The range of need will include those for whom language and communication difficulties are the result of permanent sensory or physical impairment”

Paragraph 7:55

Speech, language and communication

For the majority of children speech, language and communication skills develop naturally from birth. The stages in development are well recognised and by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage although children typically have speech and language immaturities, the basic building blocks for learning and communication are well established.

The **Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage** reminds us that babies and children “learn to talk by being talked to”. It outlines how positive relationships and enabling environments contribute to this development, and how learning and development can be supported. The National Strategies Inclusion Development Programme provides a useful guide: ‘Supporting children with Speech, Language and Communication difficulties’.

Communication and interaction difficulties cover a wide and complex range of needs that frequently overlap. These include:

- *Developmental language delay*
Children may have a delay in one or more aspect of language (understanding, expression, interaction) but progress, however slow, follows a typical pattern of development.
- *Developmental language disorder*
Children may show an uneven or unusual pattern in one or more aspects of language (understanding, expression, interaction)

Speech difficulty

Children may make errors in speech sound production which may affect the intelligibility of their speech

- *Receptive language difficulty*
Children may have particular difficulty in understanding the meaning of words and in developing concepts or have difficulties understanding complex grammar or inferred meaning.

- *Expressive language difficulty*
Children may have difficulty in learning and using vocabulary, and/or complex sentences; it may be hard for them to express ideas, to structure sentences and convey intended meaning.
- *Social-communication difficulties (See below)*
Children may have difficulty communicating with and relating to people around them.

Social communication difficulties

Children with social communication difficulties will have particular problems in the following three areas:-

Social interaction
Communication (verbal and non verbal)
Use of imagination / flexibility of thought

Regardless of their level of language ability

Ways in which children may be affected by social communication difficulties

Social communication difficulties can affect children with any level of learning and development. Children with these difficulties vary greatly in the way these problems affect their learning. Some children will develop good strategies and learn to handle a wide range of situations, whilst others will find social relationships and learning in a social context very difficult.

Social interaction

Children with social communication difficulties have problems in understanding the social behaviour of others to and find it hard to play and interact effectively with peers and adults. Typically developing children understand and learn how to engage with other people without it being explicitly taught.

Communication

Children with social communication difficulties have problems in understanding the communication and language of others and also in developing effective communication themselves. Many are delayed in learning to speak and some do not develop speech at all. Children who have speech have difficulties in using this to communicate effectively.

It is likely they will need to be taught

- The purpose of communication
- A means to communicate (using objects, pictures, gestures, spoken or written words)
- How to communicate in appropriate and flexible ways

Use of imagination / flexibility of thought

Children with social communication difficulties often do not play with toys in a conventional way, but instead may spin or flap objects or watch moving parts of toys or machinery for long periods and with intense concentration. Their play tends to be isolated or alongside others rather than **with** others. They may run the toy car in and out of the garage but not act out more complex stories. Some children seem to act out stories or take on particular characters, but the story turns out to be an imitation of a video or book. This doesn't mean that children with these difficulties don't have any imagination; it just means they tend to be less able to share their imaginative ideas with other children.

Sensory difficulties

A significant number of children with social communication difficulties are very sensitive (hypersensitive) or under sensitive (hyposensitive) in one or more of their senses. Some children shift between the two. They may have heightened sensitivity to certain types of sound, touch, texture, taste of food, light, colour or smell. Sensory difficulties can have a significant impact on behaviour and communication.

Autistic spectrum disorders

Some of the children with **social communication difficulties** will have a diagnosis of an **autistic spectrum disorder** (ASD). Many of the strategies that are helpful for children with a diagnosis of ASD will be helpful for children with social communication difficulties. It is important to remember that having a disorder like ASD is just one of the factors influencing a child's behaviour. Other factors include the child's personality, the environment, family characteristics and the child's strengths and interests.

Practitioners should note that a medical diagnosis of an autistic spectrum disorder does not, of itself, determine which phase of action of the SEN Code of Practice is appropriate to meet the child's needs. In all cases the prime consideration will be the needs of the child.

Characteristics and Provision Sections

The following sections detail:

- **An introduction and user guide to the Speech and Language Descriptors and Responses.** This explains how to profile the speech and language needs of a child and when to refer to speech and language therapy
- **A Speech and Language Descriptor Profile Summary**

- **Tables of descriptors for children with speech and language needs who are 3 – 4 years (EYFS stage 30-50 months) and 4 – 5 years (EYFS stage 40-60 months).** 4 levels of characteristics are described with levels 1 and 2 corresponding to Early Years Action, and levels 3 and 4 corresponding to Early Years Action plus.
- **Provision characteristics** at Early Years Action and Early Years Action Plus for children with speech and language needs
- **Graduated descriptors for children with social communication difficulties at 3-5 years.** Children's characteristics are described within the context of the six EYFS areas of learning and development
- **Provision characteristics** at Early Years Action and Early Years Action Plus for children with Social Communication Difficulties


Speech and Language Needs: an introduction and user guide to the descriptors

Introduction

These descriptors have evolved from the previous Cambridgeshire criteria and thresholds for statutory assessment (produced in 1997). They are in response to changes both nationally and locally and the need to find a way of describing the speech, language and communication of children who are having difficulties in developing these skills.

They are designed to be used in a flexible way to describe children’s speech, language and communication difficulties. In thinking about an individual child a ‘best fit’ approach will be most helpful since no one child will exactly fit a particular level. It is also important to consider parameters of complexity (i.e. number of areas of difficulty) and severity as well as functional skills and curriculum access.

The descriptors are for 4 levels of speech, language and communication needs (1 being mild to 4 being severe). The Individual Responses to Need (IRNe)s work alongside the Code of Practice stages, and the Speech and Language Guidance to Schools document. Speech and language therapists or CYPS specialists are available to advise on use of the descriptors and the responses if there are any concerns.

	Ages 3-4 years (EYFS 30-50 months)	Ages 4-5 years (EYFS 40 – 60 months)	Code of Practice graduated response
Level 1	Mild	Mild	Early Years Action
Level 2 (below 16 th percentile)	Moderate	Moderate	Early Years Action  Early Years Action Plus
Level 3 (below 5 th percentile)	Significant	Significant	
Level 4 (below 2 nd percentile)	Severe	Severe	Complex and significant

Which children is it useful for?

The descriptors and responses may be used for a wide range of children who have speech, language and communication needs particularly where a child has a specific speech and language difficulty or where a speech and language need is related to mild or moderate learning difficulties. They are not specifically designed for children who have autistic spectrum disorders (the Social Communication Descriptors and Responses are more sensitive for this group) but results may indicate the need to explore communicative functioning more closely.

How should we profile the needs of an individual child?

The profile is designed to be used collaboratively and is best completed by setting staff and parents together. Other professionals may contribute to this discussion (for example, educational psychologists, early years' specialist teachers or speech and language therapists).

How should we record the profile?

A profile form is available for photocopying at the back of this document.

How do we complete the profile?

Use the descriptors to find the statements that most closely match the child's functioning in each area of speech, language and communication (children will often show different levels of skills in each area). Highlight those areas that cause most concern and decide on a level that best summarises the child's needs.

What do we do next?

There are several options.

- Setting staff will discuss the child's profile and decide what could be done immediately to support the child's language development and access to learning. This will be discussed with parents/carers.
- For children who have level 1 or 2 language needs setting staff will set targets to meet these and monitor progress.
- If a child has any speech difficulties or level 3 or 4 language difficulties setting staff will refer to speech and language therapy.
- If the child has level 3 or 4 difficulties, you can discuss appropriate support with your Early Years Support for Learning Team

Is there anything else we can do?

- Advice can be found in The National Strategies Inclusion development Programme: Supporting children with speech, language and communication needs: Guidance for practitioners in the Early Years Foundation Stage. You can download this from www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk
- Elklan training is recommended for teaching assistants. This is an accredited training course which runs for 10 weekly sessions, to enable assistants to develop skills in supporting children who have speech, language and communication needs. Details of the training are available in the Inclusion Training booklet.

- From June 2008 there has been a Cambridgeshire joint agency website to support the delivery of services for children who have speech, language and communication needs. This will be particularly for setting and school staff and parents/carers to access advice and resources.

www.slc.cambridgeshire.nhs.uk

www.slc.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Speech and Language Descriptor Profile Summary

Name of child _____ Date of birth _____

Year group _____ Name of person completing descriptors _____

Date profile completed _____ Date discussed with parents/carers _____

Language area	Descriptor level	Comments
Attention and listening		
Receptive language		
Expressive language		
Speech		
Interaction skills		
Overall level: _____	IRNe: _____	

Speech and Language Descriptors Level 1
Early Years Foundation Stage Age 3 - 4 (EYFS 30 – 50 months)

Attention and listening

- Almost age appropriate, can easily pay attention to adult-led task
- Beginning to control own focus of attention
- Tires easily when listening or can sometimes appear inattentive or distracted in a small group, even with a practical activity

Receptive language

- Can understand a wide range of verbs, adjectives and prepositions but may occasionally be confused with longer instructions.
- Some delay in responding but does so appropriately

Expressive language

- Using a range of words and sentences but more limited than their peers
- Has occasional naming difficulties, may use words like 'thing' or 'that'
- Can relate an event but may need help to retell a short story

Speech

- Speech is clear to both unfamiliar and familiar listeners although at times clarity may be lost
- Errors are immature rather than disordered, e.g. 'f' for 'th'
- Immature production of multisyllabic words, e.g. 'efant' for 'elephant'

Interaction skills

- Mainly age appropriate – communicating with other children to share the experience
- Using some make-believe play which can involve other children
- Initiates conversation using short, simple sentences, needs support and encouragement to sustain interaction
- Needs encouragement to take part in large group conversations
- Does not always acknowledge responses (verbal and non-verbal) of others
- Language may have restricted focus or meaning

Speech and Language Descriptors Level 2

Early Years Foundation Stage Age 3 - 4 (EYFS 30 – 50 months)

Attention and Listening

- May need some reminders to listen when 1:1, more in a small group and frequently in a whole class group
- May need adult input to sustain attention, either one-to-one or in a group but can generally do so without help for short periods

Receptive language

- Difficulty in understanding spoken instructions with 3 or more information carrying words
- Longer sentences more difficult for child to follow – may need a repetition or for information to be ‘chunked’ into smaller parts
- Sometimes needs extra time to respond

Expressive language

- Able to put three or more words together in a sentence
- Using only simple sentences that may contain grammatical immaturities, e.g. ‘me got’
- Some hesitations when naming and may misname items e.g. orange for apple or use non-specific labels e.g. ‘stuff’. May need extra time to name
- May need some help to relate an event

Speech

- Speech is understood in context but sometimes is not clear to unfamiliar listeners

Interaction skills

- Needs support/encouragement to initiate speech or to take part in group conversations
- Joins in familiar play routines when prompted or directed by an adult
- May have reduced make-believe play
- Mild impairments in non-verbal communication such as eye contact, gesture and facial expression

Speech and Language Descriptors Level 3

Early Years Foundation Stage Age 3 - 4 (EYFS 30 – 50 months)

Attention and listening

- Short attention span better for practical activities than for language based activities even when 1:1
- May have single channelled attention – unable to listen to an instruction whilst looking at something else.
- Will need adult help to attend to a task
- Difficulty in sustaining attention in a group and will need prompting or reminders to listen

Receptive language

- Difficulty in consistently understanding spoken language containing 2 - 3 information carrying words and needs contextual support
- May need more than one repetition of short instructions or questions
- Limited ability to generalise simple concepts (e.g. size, colour)
- Can respond to “what?” “where?” and “who?” questions
- Often slow and inconsistent responses
- Does not respond to requests/instructions given to whole class/group

Expressive language

- Number of words used is limited and consists of only short two or three word phrases
- Confuses or omits position words (e.g. under) and has limited use of conjunctions, e.g. ‘and’ ‘because’.
- Rarely uses ‘wh’ question words, e.g. “where?” “who?” “when?”
- Cannot relate an event without support
- Frequently repeats what has been heard without understanding (echolalia) or is using learnt phrases
- Uses gesture and context alongside oral language to express ideas and needs

Speech

- Speech is difficult to understand, except when the context is clear – speech is usually intelligible to parents/carers but not unfamiliar listeners

Interaction Skills

- Difficulties in initiating and sustaining appropriate interaction and unable to take part in group conversations
- Unable to take turns without adult support
- Prefers to play alone and is resistant to other children intervening
- Some difficulty in understanding basic non-verbal communication, e.g. eye contact, facial expression and gesture
- Language used may be stereotyped or inappropriate

Speech and Language Descriptors Level 4

Early Years Foundation Stage Age 3 - 4 (EYFS 30 – 50 months)

Attention and listening

- Attention is fleeting and is either unfocused or over-focused on a detail/object
- Attention is not under the child's control and does not respond to adult intervention
- May only focus on activity of his/her own choosing and cannot be persuaded to change to another
- Needs constant prompting/reminders to listen, even when 1:1 with adult

Receptive language

- Little or no understanding of words and concepts (within child's own experience) and unable to understand more than 1 information carrying word phrase without substantial support
- Regularly needs supporting strategies or is wholly reliant on adult help to follow instructions/commands
- Does not understand "wh?" questions and often gives inappropriate answers to questions or directions, e.g. "What?" "Where?" "Who?"
- Inability to follow a simple conversation
- Alternative and augmentative communication may be required/essential to aid understanding

Expressive language

- Uses less than 50 words and does not put words together in short phrases or frequently uses jargon
- Frequently uses inappropriate language, including learnt words and phrases
- Relies on gesture rather than words or another form of augmentative communication

Speech

- Speech is difficult to understand, even in context with a limited or severely reduced number of speech sounds present – may only have vowel sounds
- Severely delayed/disordered sound system e.g. "bi" for fish, "ham" for Sam; "denplay" for birthday
- May use or need alternative/augmentative communication

Interaction Skills

- Interaction purely on child's own terms with both adults and children
- Finds it hard to tolerate any interaction from another child
- Severe difficulty in understanding or using basic non-verbal communication, e.g. eye contact, facial expression and gesture
- No initiation of conversations
- May use constant echolalia (repeating back sentences)

Speech and Language Descriptors Level 1
Early Years Foundation Stage Age 4 – 5 (EYFS 40- 60 months)

Attention and listening

- Almost age appropriate, can easily pay attention to adult-led task and beginning to concentrate on doing and listening at the same time
- Beginning to control own focus of attention
- Tires easily when listening or can sometimes appear inattentive or distracted in a small group setting, more so than peers

Receptive language

- Can understand a wide range of verbs, adjectives and prepositions but may occasionally be confused with more longer instructions
- Some delay in responding but then does so appropriately although may sometimes need a repetition

Expressive language

- sing a range of words and sentences but more limited than their peers
- Has occasional naming difficulties, may use words like 'thing' or 'that'
- Can retell a short story with some prompting
- Needs support to maintain a simple two-way conversation

Speech

- Speech is clear to both unfamiliar and familiar listeners although at times clarity may be lost
- Speech sounds are immature and may sound like a slightly younger child
- Immature production of multisyllabic words

Interaction skills

- Mainly age appropriate – communicating with other children to share the experience
- Using some make-believe play which can involve other children
- Initiates conversation using short, simple sentences, needs support and encouragement to sustain interaction
- Needs encouragement to take part in large group conversations
- Does not always acknowledge responses (verbal and non-verbal) of others
- Language may have restricted focus or meaning

Speech and Language Descriptors Level 2
Early Years Foundation Stage Age 4 – 5 (EYFS 40- 60 months)

Attention and Listening

- May need some reminders to listen when 1:1, more in a small group and frequently in a whole class group
- May need adult input to sustain attention, either one-to-one or in a group but can generally do so without help for short periods

Receptive language

- Difficulty in understanding spoken instructions with 3 or more information carrying words, but is not dependent on contextual support
- Longer sentences more difficult for child to follow – may often need a repetition or for information to be ‘chunked’ into smaller parts
- Does not fully understand questions like “why?” “when?” and “how?”
- Sometimes needs extra time to respond

Expressive language

- Using only simple sentences that may contain grammatical immaturities, e.g. ‘me got’
- Some difficulty in processing and naming and may misname items e.g. orange for apple or use non-specific labels e.g. ‘stuff’. May need extra time to name
- Will need help to retell a short story

Speech

- Speech is understood in context but sometimes is not clear to unfamiliar listeners
- Speech sounds very immature compared to peers

Interaction skills

- Needs support/encouragement to initiate speech or to take part in group conversations
- Joins in familiar play routines when prompted or directed by an adult
- Understanding of language is frequently literal
- May have reduced make-believe play
- Mild impairments in non-verbal communication such as eye contact, gesture and facial expression

Speech and Language Descriptors Level 3
Early Years Foundation Stage Age 4 – 5 (EYFS 40- 60 months)

Attention and listening

- Short attention span better for practical activities than for language based activities even when 1:1
- May have single channelled attention – unable to listen to an instruction whilst looking at something else.
- Will need adult help to attend to a task
- Difficulty in sustaining attention in a group and will need prompting or reminders to listen

Receptive language

- Difficulty in consistently understanding spoken language containing 2 - 3 information carrying words without contextual support
- Understanding is restricted to literal/concrete interpretation of language
- May need more than one repetition of short instructions or questions
- Limited ability to generalise simple concepts (e.g. size, colour)
- Does not respond to “why?” “when?” and “how?” questions
- Often slow and inconsistent responses, even with prompting
- Does not respond to requests/instructions given to whole class/group

Expressive language

- Number of words used is limited and consists of only short two or three word phrases
- Confuses or omits position words (e.g. under) and has limited use of conjunctions, e.g. ‘and’ ‘because’.
- Rarely uses ‘wh’ question words, e.g. where, who, when
- Cannot relate events or maintain a simple conversation, even if supported
- Frequently repeats what has been heard without understanding (echolalia) or is using learnt phrases, including stereotypical words
- Uses gesture and context alongside oral language to express ideas and needs

Speech

- Speech is difficult to understand, except when the context is clear – speech is usually intelligible to parents/carers but not unfamiliar listeners
- Moderately delayed or disordered speech sounds, e.g. frequently missing final or initial sounds from words and frequent substitutions of one sound for another, e.g. ‘dun’ for ‘sun’ or ‘fars’ for ‘grass

Interaction Skills

- Difficulties in initiating and sustaining appropriate interaction – language may be stereotyped or inappropriate
- Unable to take turns without adult support
- Prefers to play alone and is resistant to other children intervening
- Some difficulty in understanding basic non-verbal communication, e.g. eye contact, facial expression and gesture

Speech and Language Descriptors Level 4
Early Years Foundation Stage Age 4 – 5 (EYFS 40- 60 months)

Attention and listening

- Attention is fleeting and is either unfocused or over-focused on a detail/object
- Attention is not under the child's control and does not respond to adult intervention
- May only focus on activity of his/her own choosing and cannot be persuaded to change to another
- Needs constant prompting/reminders to listen, even when 1:1 with adult

Receptive language

- Little or no understanding of words and concepts (within child's own experience) and unable to understand more than 1 information carrying word phrase without substantial support
- Regularly needs supporting strategies or is wholly reliant on adult help to follow instructions/commands
- Does not understand "wh?" questions and often gives inappropriate answers to questions or directions
- Alternative and augmentative communication may be required/essential to aid understanding

Expressive language

- Unable to re-tell a simple story or have simple two-way conversation
- Frequently uses inappropriate language, including learnt words and phrases
- Relies on gesture rather than words or another form of augmentative communication

Speech

- Speech is difficult to understand, even in context with a limited or severely reduced number of speech sounds present – may only have vowel sounds
- Severely delayed/disordered sound system e.g. "bi" for fish, "ham" for Sam; "denplay" for birthday
- May use or need alternative/augmentative communication

Interaction Skills

- Interaction purely on child's own terms with both adults and children
- Finds it hard to tolerate any interaction from another child
- Severe difficulty in understanding or using basic non-verbal communication, e.g. eye contact, facial expression and gesture
- Doesn't initiate or take part in conversations

Early Years Action

Assessment, planning and review	Parents/carers' and child's participation	Curriculum and teaching methods	Resources
<p>Assessment, planning and review may need to take account of the child's attendance at more than one setting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting supplements their normal systems of assessment, monitoring and planning by further observation in order to understand child's current interests, development and learning needs (i.e. needs that are additional to or different from what is usually provided for all children within the setting). Observation takes place around different activities and environments within the setting, e.g. outdoor environment, at lunchtime. • Planning intervention involving the parent/carer, child, setting SENCO, key person, and takes account of any existing advice from the Speech and Language Therapist. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers contribute to assessment. • Parents/carers give informed written consent for the involvement of external agencies. • Parents/carers invited to participate in ICP target setting, monitoring progress and reviews, and may be involved in supporting targets in the home. • The ascertainable views of the child are taken account of. • Opportunities for parents/carers to learn how to help their child further. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grouping strategies used flexibly to enhance learning and access to the curriculum and focus available adult support where needed. • Additional adult attention and/or support for group activities where relevant • Approaches used show acceptance and empathy for the child, support for their emotions, and aims to build positive relationship with them. • Emphasis on providing an enabling environment both inside and outside, with developmentally appropriate resources, and on differentiation for curriculum access. Possibly some specific reinforcement or skill-development activities in support of ICP targets. • Adaptation of content and presentation of language-based activities and materials at group times (e.g. story, singing times), such as seating child close to adult, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-off advice may be sought from the Early Years Support for Learning team • All adults are aware of child's language needs, and give consideration to modifying the language they use with the child, and/or how to facilitate the child's use of language. • Additional adult attention and/or support for some activities, including targets, verbal exchanges and play with other children, from practitioners already working in the setting. • Supervision and monitoring of the ICP by SENCO.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Child Plan (ICP*) drawn up with SMART targets. • Half-termly (approximately 6-weekly) review of child's progress towards targets recorded on the IEP. 		<p>checking that the child is giving attention by saying their name, repeating instructions individually to child, simplifying and/or reducing amount of language used.</p>	
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**An individual Child Plan (ICP) may take the form of an Individual Education Plan (IEP), Behaviour and/ or Care Plan*

Early Years Action Plus

Assessment, planning and review	Parents/carers' and child's participation	Curriculum and teaching methods	Resources
<p>Assessment, planning and review may need to take account of the child's attendance at more than one setting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing observation undertaken in order to understand child's current interests, development and learning needs that are additional to or different from what is usually provided for all children within the setting, including samples of child's language. • Planning of intervention involving the parent/carer, child, setting SENCO, key person, and advising agencies. • Individual Child Plan (ICP*) drawn up with SMART targets, which take account of specialist advice. • Half-termly (approximately 6-weekly) review of child's progress towards targets recorded on the ICP. • Input or attendance made by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers contribute to assessment. • Parents/carers give informed written consent for the involvement of external agencies. • Parents/carers invited to participate in IEP target setting, monitoring progress and reviews, and may be involved in supporting targets in the home. • The ascertainable views of the child are taken account of. • Opportunities for parents/carers to work in partnership with practitioners and specialist support professionals to share knowledge and develop a consistent approach to developing the child's speech and language skills. • Enhanced contact for parents with key person in setting. Contact book or diary might be used to facilitate discussion of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grouping strategies used flexibly to enhance learning and access to the curriculum, and to focus available adult support where needed. • Additional adult attention and/or support for group activities. • Access to individually supported activities. This may involve working as part of a small group or one-to-one with an adult on ICP targets. Particular emphasis on supporting language understanding or expression as necessary. • Approaches used show acceptance and empathy for the child, support for their emotions, and aims to build positive relationship with them. • Emphasis on providing an enabling environment both inside and outside, with developmentally appropriate resources, with increased differentiation of curriculum access and materials, to reflect child's developmental and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training needs are addressed (e.g. in use of augmented forms of communication, such as Makaton signing), and information passed to other staff and parents as appropriate. • Advice is sought on an ongoing basis from the Early Years Support for Learning Team informs planning. • Consultation with or individual referral to external agencies, including the Speech and Language Therapy Service. All adults are aware of child's language needs, and give consideration to modifying the language they use with the child, and/or how to facilitate the child's use of language in verbal exchanges and play with other children. • Additional adult attention and/or support for some activities, including ICP targets. • Supervision and monitoring of the ICP by SENCO.

<p>appropriate external agencies to reviews.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration given to using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). 	<p>activities at home and in setting.</p>	<p>language levels, with key learning outcomes identified from ICP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased focus on specific activities and/or use of resources, including ICT and specialist equipment/materials /communication techniques, as identified through involvement of external agencies. • Thought is given to how all adults are modelling language, and supporting the child's understanding and use of language across the curriculum, e.g. through varying pace of delivery, time given to respond, use of visual cues, support to focus & listen, opportunities to repeat/practice speech. Implementation of IDP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time allocated for key professionals to liaise with external agencies. • Access to ICT and specialist equipment/materials if appropriate.
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**An individual Child Plan (ICP) may take the form of an Individual Education Plan (IEP), Behaviour and/ or Care Plan*

Social Communication Difficulties Descriptors

Early Years Foundation Stage Children’s Characteristics 36 – 60 months

	Early Years Action	Early Years Action Plus	Significant and Complex needs
<p>Personal, Social and Emotional Development</p> <p><i>Capacity to share attention & interact with others</i></p>	<p>Is able to share attention with others, and make a response to others’ social approaches or accept others joining in their play, but this is limited for their age (e.g. may look when name is called, accept toy offered by another child) or may be mostly on their own terms. Self-chosen activities are more solitary than is usual for their age.</p>	<p>Capacity to share attention with others or make a social response is limited to familiar situations, learnt sequences, or requires prompting and/or modelling by an adult, or other visual cues. Self-chosen activities are frequently solitary.</p>	<p>Has considerable difficulty sharing attention and responding to others socially. Intensive attempts and/or familiarly structured arrangements needed to gain their attention. Self-chosen activities are solitary.</p>
<p><i>Responding</i></p>	<p>Responses to others may be unusual for their age on occasions. Repeated use of name may be needed to gain their attention. At times they may seem unaware of peers playing alongside them.</p>	<p>Responses to others are often unusual for their age. Persistence may be needed to get the child’s attention. They may cause disruption or distress to peers, e.g. pushing away, hitting, kicking, or may be inappropriately ‘over-friendly’, e.g. indiscriminate hugging.</p>	<p>Responses to others are mostly unusual, negative or absent. The child responds in a very unusual way: positively (e.g. leaning against them, hugging, staring at them closely & intently); negatively (e.g. pushing, slapping, kicking); passively, allowing themselves to be led and directed, (e.g. to sit in a particular place).</p>
<p><i>Initiating</i></p>	<p>Approaches to adults are limited to having needs met and some commenting.</p>	<p>Approaches to adults are limited to having needs met.</p>	<p>Approaches to adults are severely limited and unusual for their age, or absent. For example, the child may approach adults and lean against them, take their hand, sit on them.</p>

	Approaches to other children are limited, e.g. confined to particular turn-taking games, or limited to outdoor chasing play. They may show difficulty accommodating other children's suggestions, so that adult attention is needed to enable turn-taking and shared play to occur.	Approaches to other children are often unusual or limited, e.g. repeatedly asking the same question, commenting without awaiting a response, getting too close, stroking. May be limited to running about with others or to participating in particular forms of familiar or rehearsed interaction under adult direction, e.g. structured, turn-taking games, limited film or TV programme scenarios. They may be frequently negative in nature, e.g. snatching, pushing, and often require adult attention.	Approaches to other children are unusual and very limited or absent. For example, they may be limited to watching others, running with them, showing excitement at others' singing or noisiness. They may be mostly negative in nature and cause disruption or distress to peers, e.g. pushing, licking, pulling hair, and require intensive adult attention.
<i>Imitating</i>	Able to spontaneously imitate or repeat adults' or other children's actions to participate in play, e.g. will copy another person pouring sand in a bucket, will continue placing marbles in a run, once their attention is gained and where the activity is motivating for them.	May not spontaneously imitate or repeat adult' or other children's actions to participate in play, but can copy actions when given encouragement and some visual or physical prompts, e.g. gestures or signs, hand-over-hand guidance.	Unable to learn new play routines through spontaneous imitation. Needs these to be taught through a structured approach involving, for example, visual prompts, routine, and meaningful motivators.
<i>Engaging in adult-led activities</i>	Responds to request to join adult in 1-1 or small group activity, e.g. collage, playdough activity, with minimum of persuasion.	Often resists participating in 1-1 or small group adult led activity, but will join in purposefully with some insistence, appropriate support structures (e.g. visual cues or objects of reference) if activity is part of daily routine or personally motivating (e.g. an action rhyme or other musical activity).	Resistant to 1-1 adult led activities, or unusually passive and accepting of adult direction and hand-over-hand guidance without particularly purposeful engagement with task or activity. A high level of exposure, adult persistence, and adaptation of presentation of the activity, is needed to engage the child meaningfully.

<p><i>Participating in whole-group activities</i></p>	<p>Will sit with whole group for registration/story/circle time but needs some adult prompting to remain with the group, follow whole-group directions, participate</p>	<p>Needs more intensive individual visual prompts or structure to remain with the whole group and participate.</p>	<p>Unable to respond to whole-group directions. Needs individually-given visual prompts or structure to remain with the whole group, and then may still show difficulty participating in a meaningful way. Little awareness of being part of a group.</p>
<p><i>Managing change</i></p>	<p>May show some difficulty with managing change, e.g. moving from 'free choice' play to group time, moving from outdoor play to indoors, so that some additional verbal prompt or visual cue is needed.</p>	<p>May show difficulty with managing change, so that additional individually-given visual support and structure is needed at certain times of change, e.g. coming in from outside play; at tidy-up time; change of planned activity.</p>	<p>Consistently shows difficulty with managing change, so that additional individually-given concrete support, e.g. an object of reference, and structure is needed to manage change.</p>
<p>Communication Language and Literacy</p> <p><i>Non-verbal communication</i></p>	<p>Shows some understanding and use of non-verbal signals (e.g. eye contact, facial expression, gesture) to respond to or make meaningful contact with peers and adults, but does not readily learn social language (e.g. to greet others with 'hello', or say 'bye-bye') or social behaviour (e.g. nodding, waving) from observing others, as is usual for their age.</p>	<p>Shows limited understanding and use of non-verbal signals (e.g. eye gaze, gestures, facial expression) in interaction with others. May have some learnt social language or gestures, such as waving 'bye-bye', nodding 'yes', giving a greeting, and needs teaching to acquire others.</p>	<p>Extremely limited use of non-verbal signals (e.g. eye gaze, gestures, facial expression) to socially interact with others. Profound lack of social language or gestures, such as waving 'bye-bye', nodding 'yes', giving a greeting.</p>

<i>Using language</i>	If spoken language is present there may be difficulties with using it or responding to others' language in age-appropriate ways, e.g. it may be used mostly to have needs met rather than to engage socially, or it may be superficially 'advanced' but use may not be socially meaningful. Child shows difficulty initiating or sustaining a conversational exchange.	If spoken language is present it may involve jargon or echolalia, and may not be used in socially meaningful ways, as used by typically-developing children. For example, is not naming things & people, commenting on what is happening, telling someone something, responding to an adult's questions or comments, protesting, expressing likes & dislikes, feelings, describing actions. Child shows marked difficulties initiating and/or sustaining a conversational exchange.	If spoken language is present, it is very limited and is not used or responded to in age-appropriate and socially-meaningful ways. Child is not able to initiate a conversational exchange (at whatever level of language skill is present).
Creative Development <i>Imagination</i>	Self-chosen play may be limited and repetitive rather than creative, but can develop and change over time, with some adult attention.	Self-chosen play is repetitive rather than creative, and may not develop and change over time. Child may engage in sequences of play with toys but these are likely to be learnt and may be inflexible. With adult attention and structure, child can widen range and nature of play and repeat this when playing alone.	Self-chosen play is severely limited in scope for their age, and lacks creativity or purposefulness. Patterns of interest may be unusual in terms of intensity or focus, e.g. child may be more interested in the non functional elements of a toy, or may mouth a lot. With adult attention, child still shows significant difficulty widening range of self-chosen play, so that structured teaching is needed to extend play skills.

<p>Sensory difficulties</p>	<p>May show different responses to sensory experiences, including pain. May be over-sensitive (hyper) or under-sensitive (hypo) to experiences.</p> <p>Touch - May be sensitive to touch on particular parts of the body or to the intensity of touch. May affect e.g. wearing new clothes/shoes, washing hair, cleaning teeth or physical contact with others. May not respond to the levels of pain others find unbearable e.g. drinking overly hot drinks, not registering illness or injury, wearing too few or too many clothes for the environmental conditions. May respond strongly to gentle touch, minor knocks may cause extreme discomfort.</p> <p>Taste – May be sensitivity to taste and texture of food. Bland smooth foods may be preferred or strong spicy foods chosen. May need to touch or smell food before tasting. May need to keep different foods separate on the plate. Some children don't distinguish between food and non-edibles, e.g. may eat sand, stones, unaware of potential harm.</p> <p>Sound – Sudden loud noises such as fire alarms, music, dogs barking; prolonged noises such as hand dryers, singing; and busy noisy places with a confusion of sounds (shopping centres, playgroups) may all cause anxiety</p> <p>Smell – Certain smells can be over powering. Changes in perfume or washing powder, for example, may result in behaviour changes.</p> <p>Vision – Certain objects or intensity of light may cause confusion or discomfort. Visual processing of space and depth, objects, people and colours may be different. Poor depth perception may result in clumsiness.</p> <p>Balance and body awareness – Processing information about balance, posture and body awareness may be different, body movements difficult to control. Spinning or flapping may be meeting a sensory need. Understanding others personal space difficult, may come uncomfortably close</p>
<p>Attainment and learning response</p>	<p>Children with social-communication difficulties show attainments at any level. They may show an uneven profile, for example, high level of skill or knowledge in one or two limited areas, or may have general and severe learning difficulties.</p>

Early Years Action

Assessment, planning and review	Parents/carers' and child's participation	Curriculum and teaching methods	Resources
<p>Assessment, planning and review may need to take account of the child's attendance at more than one setting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting supplements their normal systems of assessment, monitoring and planning by further observation in order to understand child's current interests, development and learning needs (i.e. needs that are additional to or different from what is usually provided for all children within the setting). Observation takes place around different activities and environments within the setting, e.g. outdoor environment, at lunchtime. • Planning of intervention involving the parent/carer, child, setting SENCO, key person. • Individual Child Plan (ICP*) drawn up with SMART 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers contribute to assessment. • Parents/carers give informed written consent for the involvement of external agencies. • Parents/carers invited to participate in target setting, monitoring progress and reviews, and may be involved in supporting targets in the home. • The ascertainable views of the child are taken account of. • Opportunities for parents/carers to work in partnership with practitioners to share knowledge and develop a consistent approach to developing the child's social-communication skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grouping strategies used flexibly to enhance learning and access to the curriculum, and to focus available adult support where needed. • Additional adult attention and/or support for group activities where relevant. • Approaches used show acceptance and empathy for the child, support for their emotions, and aims to build positive relationship with them. • Emphasis on providing an enabling environment both inside and outside, with developmentally appropriate resources, and on differentiation for curriculum access. Possibly some specific reinforcement or skill-development activities in support of targets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training needs are addressed and information passed to other staff and parents as appropriate. • One-off advice may be sought from the Support for Learning Teams to inform planning. Adoption of a whole setting approach involving all staff who may come into contact with the child. • Additional adult attention and/or support for some activities, including ICP targets, from practitioners already working in the setting. • Supervision and monitoring of the ICP by SENCO. • Provision of the following as needed to accommodate child's learning characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some additional prompting, support to focus attention, manage change of activities - Support for social interactions, communication, play with

<p>targets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least half-termly (approximately 6-weekly) review of child's progress towards targets recorded on the IEP. 			<p>other children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Willingness to make minor adaptations to physical environment to support learning <p>Awareness of need to simplify language and/or use visual cues to support child's understanding</p>
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Early Years Action Plus

Assessment, planning and review	Parents/carers' and child's participation	Curriculum and teaching methods	Resources
<p>Assessment, planning and review may need to take account of the child's attendance at more than one setting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing observation undertaken in order to understand child's current interests, development and learning needs that are additional to or different from what is usually provided for all children within the setting. Observation relates specifically to social interaction, social communication, and imagination skills • Planning intervention involving the parent/carer, child, setting SENCO, key person, and advising agencies. • Individual Child Plan (ICP*) is drawn up with SMART targets, which take account of specialist advice. • At least 6-weekly reviews of child's progress towards targets recorded on the ICP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers contribute to assessment. • Parents/carers give informed written consent for the involvement of external agencies. • Parents/carers invited to participate in ICP target setting, monitoring progress and reviews, and may be involved in supporting targets in the home. • The ascertainable views of the child are taken account of. • Opportunities for parents/carers to work in partnership with practitioners and specialist support professionals to share knowledge and develop a consistent approach to developing the child's social-communication skills. • Enhanced contact for parents with key person in setting. Contact book or diary might be used to facilitate discussion of activities at home and in setting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grouping strategies used flexibly to enhance learning and access to the curriculum, and to focus available adult support where needed. • Additional adult attention and/or support for group activities. • Access to individually supported activities. This may involve working as part of a small group or one-to-one with an adult on ICP targets. • Additional focus is given to activities which address the child's difficulties, using specific teaching approaches as necessary (e.g. a structured programme to develop social-communication skills regardless of language level), developed in consultation with the Early Years Support for Learning Team • Focus is on developing the skills needed to function in the early years setting: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training needs about the nature of social-communication difficulties/ASD are addressed (this should include lunch time supervisors, etc). • Advice is sought on an ongoing basis from the Early Years Support for Learning Teams and informs planning. Planning takes account of available advice from health professionals, such as the Speech and Language Therapist or Occupational Therapist. • Access to network groups for support and sharing of strategies. • Practitioners knowledgeable about voluntary agencies / support groups who can give advice/support to parents/carers. • Adoption of a whole setting approach involving all staff who may come into contact with the child. • Additional adult attention and/or support for some

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input or attendance made by appropriate external agencies to reviews. • Consideration given to using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the ability to attend - to imitate others - to understand and use language - to play appropriately with toys - to interact socially with others • Approaches used show acceptance and empathy for the child, support for their emotions, and aims to build positive relationship with them. • Emphasis on providing an enabling environment both inside and outside, with developmentally appropriate resources, with increased differentiation of curriculum access and materials, to reflect child's language & social-communication skill levels, with key learning outcomes identified from ICP. • Flexibility within the curriculum to make changes according to need. For example, planning participation or alternative provision at times of whole-group activities, physical activities, etc. as necessary. 	<p>activities, including targets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision and monitoring of the Child's Plan by SENCO. • Provision of the following as needed to accommodate child's learning characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Designated quiet area to give child opportunities to withdraw from social situations to reduce stress and anxiety - Clearly defined and marked areas within the setting identifying different activity areas - Use of pictures, objects, gestures and other visual forms to support spoken language - Appropriate motivators • Commitment to liaison with parents / carers to ensure consistency of approach. • Time allocated for key professionals to liaise with external agencies • Additional access to ICT and specialist equipment/materials as necessary.
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**An individual Child Plan (ICP) may take the form of an Individual Education Plan (IEP), Behaviour and/ or Care Plan*

A Graduated Response to Special Educational Needs – a guide to children’s characteristics and provision actions in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Sensory and/or Physical: Introduction

The SEN Code of Practice 2001 states:

“There is a wide spectrum of sensory, multi-sensory and physical difficulties. The sensory range extends from profound and permanent deafness or visual impairment through to lesser levels of loss, which may only be temporary. a few children will have multi-sensory difficulties some with associated physical difficulties. For some children the inability to take part fully in school life causes significant emotional stress or physical fatigue.”

The importance of early identification, assessment and provision for children with hearing and visual impairment cannot be over emphasised. The earlier action is taken, the more responsive the child is likely to be and the more readily can intervention be made. These descriptors aim to support practitioners using the Cambridgeshire criteria and thresholds for statutory assessment for children who have a sensory impairment. Children with severe or profound sensory loss have very significant long term educational needs and may already have a statement prior to starting at an early years setting. There are separate descriptors for the hearing impaired (HI) and visually impaired (VI) child.

As with other sections they are designed to be used flexibly in conjunction with other descriptors, once Cognition and Learning is completed. It will be important to look at how sensory or physical issues affect the child’s learning and development and this will vary for individual children. The profile should be done in conjunction with parents and any specialists involved and other professionals may contribute to the discussion.

The early years practitioner will be able to access information from specialists (with parental permission) to refer to when planning for the child and this will help match the descriptors to the child as a best fit.

Contact numbers for sensory impairment support in Cambridgeshire:

- For visual impairment support Tel: 01480 373434
- For hearing impairment support Tel: 01223 568848

Hearing Impairment: An Introduction

Background Information to Hearing Impairment:

Children's hearing is now screened at birth so diagnosis of hearing impairment should be within the first weeks of life and if hearing aids are appropriate, they will generally be fitted soon after diagnosis.

Children with hearing impairment embrace a range of intellectual abilities and, therefore, the provision must be tailored to each child. It is important that practitioners have **appropriately high expectations** for all children's learning and development despite their sensory impairment.

Practitioners need to be aware that after the fitting of hearing aids and even if the child reaches age appropriate communication, speech, language and interaction skills, h/she will have lifelong requirements to access speech and language for their learning - cognitively, socially and emotionally.

The other specialist professions who will have been involved with the child since diagnosis (and some before) include:

- Hearing screening services.
- Hospital ENT (Ear, Nose and Throat) Department.
- The hospital Audiology Department assesses a child's hearing and can remain involved if hearing aids have been fitted or in a monitoring capacity.
- Teachers of the Deaf (from The Sensory Support Service) are involved from the point of diagnosis and provide a home visiting service to families, to offer advice and monitoring on developing communication skills, speech and language development. They will have supported parents with regard to pre-school provision and may have visited the chosen setting with the family. Once the child starts at the setting the Teacher of the Deaf will visit regularly according to the child's needs.
- Speech and Language Therapists may have been consulted.
- Other specialist services may have been consulted if the child has additional special needs.

Terminology

Types of Deafness:

- Sensori-neural** Deafness caused by a fault in the inner ear or nerve of hearing (auditory nerve). Most sensori-neural deafness is caused by a problem in a part of the inner ear called the cochlea. Sensori-neural deafness is permanent and there is no medical cure.
- Conductive** Deafness caused when sounds cannot pass efficiently through the outer and middle ear to the cochlea and auditory nerve. This can be because of fluid or a blockage or because the middle ear has not formed properly. Fluid (glue ear) is very common in young children so practitioners will no doubt have come across many with this type of deafness. Most conductive deafness is temporary and medical or surgical treatments (e.g. grommets) can often improve this type of deafness.
- Mixed** Deafness can be a mixture of conductive and sensori-neural deafness.

Levels of Deafness:

The level of deafness can be described in two ways:

- as a decibel (dB) hearing level
- as **mild**, **severe** or **profound** deafness.

The table below shows the terms used to describe levels and the decibel levels that they refer to:

Level of deafness*	Hearing level in dB (loudness)
Mild	21-40
Moderate	41-70
Severe	71-95
Profound	95+

*The level of deafness is calculated by establishing the average hearing loss in a child's better ear.

If a child's hearing level is close to the next level of deafness they may be described as having **mild-to-moderate**, **moderate-to-severe** or **severe-to-profound** deafness.

The Development of Communication, Speech, Language and Interaction skills:

For the majority of hearing impaired children speech, language and communication skills do not develop naturally from birth. Communication and interaction difficulties are often the result of permanent hearing impairment.

Children will need to develop their communication, language and listening skills in order to support their thinking as well as their interaction and this has implications for their learning. In the case of HI children it is important to bear in mind a child's '**listening age**' (**i.e. the chronological age minus the age at which hearing aids were fitted**) rather than the chronological age, when looking at their communication and speech and language development.

*Other resources which will be useful for the Hearing Impaired include:
The Early Support Monitoring Protocol for deaf babies and children, DfES 2004*

Hearing Impairment Descriptors
Foundation Stage Children's Characteristics (36 to 60 months)

	Early Years Action	Early Years Action Plus	Significant and complex needs
Degree of Hearing Loss	<p>Has identified Hearing Impairment.</p> <p>Has unilateral sensori-neural hearing loss (may have aids).</p> <p>Has bilateral mild sensori-neural or conductive hearing loss (21- 40 dB) or permanent conductive loss (usually associated with a particular syndrome).</p> <p>May have one or two hearing aids.</p> <p>May have an FM system.</p>	<p>Has diagnosis of significant hearing impairment.</p> <p>Has bi-lateral moderate to severe sensori-neural or mixed sensori-neural and conductive hearing loss (41 – 75 dB).</p> <p>Will have 2 hearing aids.</p> <p>May have an FM radio aid system.</p> <p>May be using some sign language.</p> <p>May have a deteriorating hearing loss.</p>	<p>Has a diagnosis and child's needs are likely to be permanent and lifelong due to nature of disability.</p> <p>Has bi-lateral severe or profound sensori-neural hearing loss (71 - 120 dB).</p> <p>Will have 2 hearing aids or cochlear implant (may have 2 cochlear implants).</p> <p>May have an FM radio aid system. May be using British Sign or other sign system.</p> <p>The child's hearing loss, or hearing loss in conjunction with additional difficulties e.g. a language disorder, conductive hearing loss overlay, developmental delay, significantly impairs his/her access to the curriculum.</p>
<p>Language for communication and thinking</p> <p><i>Listening and attention</i></p>	<p>Listening skills may be less developed than other same-age children.</p> <p>Speaker may need to get child's attention before speaking, particularly in busy or noisy environments.</p> <p>Can listen to and understand what is being said in a group for a short story or song time.</p>	<p>Listening skills may be delayed.</p> <p>Has limited recognition of environmental sounds.</p> <p>May show some delay in responding to spoken language and need encouragement to respond.</p> <p>Can listen to and understand what is being said in a group for a short story or song time with additional adult focused attention.</p>	<p>Listening skills may be significantly delayed.</p> <p>Needs language to be simplified with opportunities for repetition and learning in relation to hearing language and sounds.</p> <p>Unable to listen to and understand what is being said in a group for a short story or song time without focused adult attention.</p>

	<p>May have short attention span.</p> <p>May need attention redirecting/focusing in listening situations.</p> <p>May find concentrating/listening difficult where there is background noise.</p>	<p>May have very limited attention span.</p> <p>May need attention redirecting/focusing in listening situations.</p> <p>May find concentrating/listening difficult where there is background noise.</p>	<p>Will need 1-1 support to help with access and supplement information to aid understanding.</p>
<p><i>Understanding of language</i></p>	<p>Can follow simple directions relating to what they are doing (e.g. 'Sit down,' 'Feed teddy,' 'Kiss Daddy night-night').</p> <p>Can understand sentences such as 'Put away your toys and we'll read a book,' and responding to simple two-part instructions or requests (e.g. 'Get your shoes and put on your coat').</p> <p>May benefit from visual information such as pictures or gestures to support understanding in less familiar contexts.</p>	<p>Takes longer than other same age children to acquire the meaning of new words for daily items or routines.</p> <p>May need two-part instructions breaking down into component parts and repeating.</p> <p>Child often needs objects, pictures, gestures or other visual information to enable understanding.</p>	<p>Needs daily planned activities to repeat the language associated with familiar objects and routines in order to show understanding of them. Understanding of new words may not be maintained unless over-learning</p> <p>Needs repeated exposure to new activity with visual support to reinforce language, e.g. objects, pictures, gestures, before able to show consistent understanding of language used in that context.</p> <p>Child always needs objects, pictures, gestures or other visual information to enable understanding.</p> <p>Parents may choose signing as a supplement to developing language skills or as main method of communication.</p>

<i>Use of language</i>	<p>Can range from being able to:</p> <p>function within the normal range of speech with some difficulties in clarity</p> <p>to</p> <p>producing utterances consisting of a few words.</p>	<p>Can range from being able to:</p> <p>produce utterances consisting of a few words</p> <p>to</p> <p>producing utterances where length, intonation, etc are more age-appropriate. Intelligibility may vary.</p>	<p>Utterances may be at a pre-verbal stage of development or may be single words, 2 or 3 words but unintelligible to all but familiar listener – incomplete articulation and lacking intonation, appropriate pitch or volume.</p> <p>Demonstrates improvement with developing auditory discrimination.</p> <p>Parents may choose signing as a supplement to developing language skills or as main method of communication.</p>
	<p>Beginning to use little ‘sentences’ by joining 2 or 3 words together, e.g. “Daddy (has gone to) work”. May use occasional longer sentences (e.g. ‘Mummy go shops now.’) Asks simple questions (e.g. ‘Where’s Mummy?’)</p> <p>Often makes attempts to get meaning across, e.g. by pointing, showing objects, gestures, taking adult by the hand, in new situations.</p>	<p>Use some single words or learnt phrases appropriately, and some ‘gobbledegook’ to convey meaning. Some of these may be ‘own words’ which only familiar adults are able to interpret.</p>	<p>Use of language is limited. There may still be ‘babble’ or ‘jargon’ with no single words. If there are single words they are used to name and comment in relation to familiar activities and routines.</p> <p>Use of any known language accompanied by pointing, showing objects, gestures, taking adult by the hand when with familiar adult.</p>
<i>Speech</i>	<p>Speech that is understandable from context and child being understood most of the time.</p>	<p>Speech that is very difficult to understand, except by a familiar adult in context and/or unless accompanied by gestures and other cues.</p>	<p>Verbal expression may be difficult to understand, even for familiar adult. Demonstrates improvement with developing auditory discrimination. Parents may choose signing as a supplement to developing language skills or as main method of communication.</p>

<p>Personal, Social and Emotional Development</p> <p><i>Dispositions and attitudes</i></p>	<p>Finds it difficult to locate people in the room.</p> <p>Does not respond to conversation readily in a noisy environment.</p> <p>May find social interaction emotionally demanding e.g. due to lack of confidence or anxiety levels.</p>	<p>May be reluctant or have difficulty in playing with other children, joining in group situations because of language content, concept formation and issues such as confidence, self esteem, anxiety or frustration.</p> <p>May express emotions through behaviours such as being withdrawn, physical, aggressive or oppositional.</p>	<p>Will often have difficulty in playing with other children, joining in group situations because of language content, concept formation.</p> <p>There maybe related emotional issues such as confidence, self-esteem, anxiety or frustration. This may be expressed in ways that appear withdrawn, aggressive, destructive or oppositional in nature.</p>
<p><i>Self confidence and self esteem</i></p>	<p>Easily becomes frustrated and may display this as tantrums.</p> <p>Shows some withdrawn or anxious behaviour. May be shy or passive.</p>	<p>Sometimes shows distress or tantrums during session.</p> <p>Often withdrawn or anxious, and may frequently be distressed at being left.</p>	<p>Often shows distress or tantrums during session if not supported.</p> <p>Can be isolated from other children.</p>
<p><i>Making relationships</i></p>	<p>When playing in the setting, regularly seeks out adults for comfort or reassurance. May sometimes be clingy.</p> <p>Play and social interaction with others sometimes limited. Brief exchanges with other children, e.g. may try to take toys.</p>	<p>Sometimes reluctant to engage in some activities. Requires a familiar adult nearby and can be very clingy.</p> <p>Play and social interaction with others often limited. May be socially excluded by other children.</p>	<p>Often reluctant/unable to engage in most activities without support from a familiar adult.</p> <p>Play and social interaction with others is very limited without support.</p>
<p><i>Behaviour and self control</i></p>	<p>Can become physical to others.</p>	<p>Incidents of hurting others, e.g. hitting, kicking, spitting, during some sessions.</p>	<p>Unpredictable outbursts of physical aggression.</p>
<p><i>Self care</i></p>	<p>May need some additional supervision at times to keep safe within the setting.</p>	<p>Needs additional supervision at times to keep safe within the setting, as poor sense of danger.</p>	<p>Needs constant supervision for protection against dangers.</p>
<p><i>Sense of community</i></p>	<p>May need some individual adult support to encourage and facilitate physical or verbal participation in group sessions.</p>	<p>Sometimes needs some individual adult support to encourage and facilitate physical or verbal participation in group sessions.</p>	<p>Withdrawn and often needs some individual adult support to encourage and facilitate physical or verbal participation in group sessions.</p>

<p>Cognition and Learning</p> <p><i>Play</i></p>	<p>Uses one object to represent another in pretend play, especially when objects have characteristics in common, e.g. uses a brick as a car, puts block on a plate as if it were a cake, holds banana as if it were a telephone.</p>	<p>Pretend play is limited to showing understanding of functional use of toy objects, e.g. may put toy telephone to ear, push a toy car with accompanying noises.</p>	<p>Pretend play is limited to showing understanding of functional use of real objects without intentional pretending, e.g. uses a hairbrush, a cup.</p>
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Hearing Impairment - Foundation Stage Provision Characteristics - Early Years Action

Assessment, planning and review	Parents'/carers' and child's participation	Curriculum and teaching methods	Resources
<p>Assessment, planning and review may need to take account of the child's attendance at more than one setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration should always be given to acoustic environment and an environmental assessment undertaken as appropriate. • Ongoing observation undertaken in order to understand the child's current interests, development and learning needs that are additional to or different from what is usually provided for all children within the setting. • Planning of interventions and monitoring of progress, involving the parent/carer, child, setting SENCO and key person and takes account of any existing medical advice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers contribute to assessment and understanding of their child. • Parents/carers give informed written consent for the involvement of external agencies. • Parents/carers invited to participate in ICP target setting, monitoring progress and reviews, and may be involved in supporting targets in the home. • The ascertainable views of the child are taken account of. • Opportunities for parents/carers to learn how to help their child further are provided or suggested. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches used show acceptance and empathy for the child, support for their emotions, and aims to build positive relationships with them. • Emphasis on providing an enabling environment both inside and outside, with increased differentiation of curriculum access and materials, to reflect child's hearing, communication and interaction needs. • Limited modifications to, and differentiation of the setting, to ensure access. • Grouping strategies used flexibly to enhance learning and access to the curriculum and to focus available adult support where needed. • Additional adult support and/or attention for group activities where relevant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional adult attention and/or support for some activities, including ICP targets, from practitioners already working in the setting. • Support for some activities from all staff in the setting, to ensure awareness of the child's needs, access and to encourage independence. • Staff training needs are addressed by the Qualified Teacher of the Hearing Impaired (QTHI) and information is passed to other staff and parents as appropriate. This will help to inform planning. • Liaison with other agencies as appropriate.

Hearing Impairment - Foundation Stage Provision Characteristics - Early Years Action Plus

Assessment, planning and review	Parents'/carers' and child's participation	Curriculum and teaching methods	Resources
<p>Assessment, planning and review may need to take account of the child's attendance at more than one setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting supplements their normal systems of assessment, monitoring and planning in order to understand child's current interests, developments and learning needs (i.e. needs that are additional to or different from what is usually provided for all children within the setting), e.g. child's ability to function in a noisy busy environment compared to quieter opportunities. • Planning of interventions and monitoring of progress, involving the parent/carer, child, setting SENCO, key person, and advising agencies (QTHI). • Consideration given to acoustic environment / minimise background noise. Environmental assessment undertaken. • Half-termly review of child's progress incorporating multi agency family service plans and Common Assessment Framework (CAF). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers contribute to assessment. • Parents/carers give informed written consent for the involvement of external agencies. • Parents/carers invited to participate in ICP target setting, monitoring progress and reviews, and may be involved in supporting targets in the home. • The ascertainable views of the child are taken account of. • Opportunities for parents/carers to work in partnership with practitioners and specialist support professionals to share knowledge and develop a consistent approach to developing the child's skills and independence. • Ongoing parental involvement and support. • Enhanced contact for parents with key person in setting. Contact book or diary might be used to facilitate discussion of activities at home and in setting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches used show acceptance and empathy for the child, support for their emotions, and aims to build positive relationship with them. • Emphasis on providing an enabling environment both inside and outside, with increased differentiation of curriculum access and materials, to reflect child's visual needs. • The child may need individualised materials to ensure appropriate access. • Increased focus on specific activities and/or use of resources, including ICT and specialist equipment/materials/communication techniques, as identified through QTHI. • Favourable seating to facilitate opportunity to see speaker's face and hear at optimum level. • Grouping strategies used flexibly to enhance learning and access to the curriculum and to focus available adult support where needed. • Access to individually supported activities. This may involve working as part of a small group or one-to-one with an adult on ICP targets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional adult attention and/or support for some activities particularly around key activities for the child's personalised planning. • Space for storage facilities for pupil's specific equipment. • Support and advice concerning the impact of the child's hearing impairment on the child's learning and development from a QTHI. This informs planning. • Staff attending training to disseminate information to appropriate members of staff. • Use of national resources such as The Early Support Monitoring Protocol for deaf babies and children, DfES 2004. • Time allocated for key professionals to liaise with parents and external agencies.

Visual Impairment: An Introduction

“Children with a visual impairment develop in much the same way as other children although there may be differences in the rate and sequence in which skills develop. . . . Many skills which other children might be expected to simply pick up may need to be deliberately introduced to children who have a visual impairment.” - Early Support (Visual Impairment) Information for parents

Vision is the major source of information (probably as much as 80%) supporting human learning. Visual impairment has many different medical causes and children’s needs vary considerably. Teachers and support staff need to understand the functional or practical implications of a child’s visual impairment as this will affect the approaches used to meet the child’s needs. A child who has a significant visual impairment will probably already be known to and supported by a Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (QTVI).

The functional implications of visual impairment can be categorised into several broad headings, of which one or more may apply to different children:

- **Blindness:** not able to see enough detail to be able to read print or only able to see hand movements or the difference between light and dark.
- **Poor acuity:** acuity is the measure of our ability to see fine detail using our central vision.
- **Central vision loss:** affects our ability to see fine detail so all tasks involving reading, writing and close observation will be more difficult.
- **Peripheral vision loss:** affects our ability to see things located outside our area of central vision.
- **Low contrast sensitivity:** the ability to distinguish different shades of grey from each other.
- **Adaptability to light:** the eye’s ability to allow in more or less light and to process changes of light and dark.
- **Impaired ocular mobility:** difficulty in controlling the muscle functions in the eye which can result in the two eyes not working together or difficulties in changing focus.

Vision is a learned process which continues to develop throughout the first years of life and does not become fully mature until around the age of seven. Vision only develops when it is used so if a child has some usable vision, it’s important they are encouraged to use it.

The process of seeing relies on the eyes and the brain being able to work together. The fact that 40% of the brain is devoted to processing visual information shows the complexity of vision. We use our eyes to make sense of what we are experiencing and much of what we see leads to incidental learning.

Key information for practitioners

A child with any degree of visual impairment may:

- Need help to make sense of the sounds they hear and to find out more about the toys, clothes and objects they touch.
- Not have the same range and variety of experiences as other children so may not participate as actively in daily routines e.g. eating, bathing, dressing.
- Be less sure of their ability to get about and therefore need help to learn about their environment.
- Not have the same quality and quantity of information available to them as there is to other children.
- Perceive only part of an object of activity.
- Have uneven development with gaps in understanding.
- Take longer to complete activities that involve vision.
- Get more tired doing everyday things because of the extra time and effort they take.
- Have difficulties in forming and keeping relationships with other children and adults because eye contact, facial expression and body language may be missed or misunderstood.
- Need more active involvement by adults to guide exploration of real objects and experiences and to provide lots of verbal explanation.

Visual Impairment Descriptors
Foundation Stage Children's Characteristics 36 – 60 months

	Early Years Action	Early Years Action Plus	Significant and Complex needs
Degree of Visual Impairment	Has somewhat reduced visual acuity as part of a developmental delay or syndrome e.g. Downs. Slightly reduced vision in one or both eyes which could affect learning.	Reduced vision, which will be impacting on learning and development. Child's corrected vision is the equivalent of 6/18 or worse in both eyes. Child has a known deteriorating visual condition. Child has a significant visual field defect.	Child has a significant visual impairment and/or is registered as Sight Impaired or Severely Sight Impaired. Child requires extensive modifications to teaching approaches and materials including either a multi-sensory approach to learning (e.g. structured use of hearing and touch). Pre-Braille tactile materials or enlarged print modified IT access (e.g. when using whiteboards).
Personal Social and Emotional Development	Shows some confidence in new situations. Expresses needs and feelings to others. Has a sense of personal identity and can form positive relationships with other children and staff independently of support.	Shows some anxiety in coping with new situations or environments. Needs some adult support to help play and interact with other children, for example to learn their names; to appreciate personal space; to join in group activities.	Specific attention to social and emotional support needed e.g. to enable the child to initiate and maintain social relationships despite the visual impairment. Adult support needed to enable the child to be fully included in groups.
Creative Development	May need verbal prompts or occasional physical support from an adult to participate. Child may not often choose craft and other fine motor activities.	Needs individual physical support, and verbal prompts from an adult. Child may not access craft and other fine motor activities spontaneously.	Child will require verbal prompts and probably physical support from an adult. Child will need to be made aware of activities, materials etc available. Task will need to be made meaningful and worthwhile. Child may need encouragement to handle soft/messy
	Child usually explores and uses a range of materials in line with their development and age.	Child needs help to use a range of materials safely and encouragement to use soft / messy materials.	

	Child can operate and use all equipment safely with initial adult support.	Child needs help or support to operate and use equipment safely.	materials. Child will need support to operate and use a range of materials and equipment safely.
	Child unlikely to need enlarged screen environment or modified equipment.	Child may need enlarged screen environment and/or specialist software to increase access to computers. Child may need some modified equipment (e.g. dark pens).	Child will need enlarged screen environment and/or specialist software to increase access to computers. Non-sighted child will need alternative access to ICT e.g. Intellikeys, talking software and additional sounds.
Physical Development <i>Movement and space, mobility</i>	Child can explore the environment independently and can negotiate the space and objects around them.	Child needs adult support when learning to explore the environment and adult help to develop awareness of the space and objects around them.	Individual support needed to learn skills for independence / mobility. Child will need skilled adult support to explore the environment and adult help to develop awareness of the space and objects around them.
	Showing increasing control in using equipment for climbing, scrambling, sliding and swinging. May need some additional supervision when using unfamiliar equipment.	Initially child may need adult support or supervision to safely use equipment for climbing, scrambling, sliding and swinging. New equipment will need a higher level of adult supervision, use of prompts to ensure safety.	Child will need verbal prompts and physical support to safely use equipment for climbing, scrambling, sliding and swinging.
Health and Bodily Awareness	Awareness and independence emerging with “light touch” adult support and encouragement in areas such as eating, dressing and toileting.	Shows awareness of own needs and self help skills with regard to eating and hygiene, but needs some adult support to meet those needs and develop independence e.g. positioning and presentation of objects.	Needs ongoing small steps teaching in areas such as eating, dressing and toileting. Child needs specific guidance to learn to attend to these needs and develop independence skills. This entails a high level of individual physical support and/or supervision. Will need adult to supervise and organise self care activities.

Visual Impairment - Characteristics of Provision - Early Years Action

Assessment, planning and review	Parents'/carers' and child's participation	Curriculum and teaching methods	Resources
<p>Assessment, planning and review may need to take account of the child's attendance at more than one setting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing observation in order to understand child's current interests, development and learning needs that are additional to or different from what is usually provided for all children within the setting. • Consideration should be given to how the environment could impact on the child's functioning e.g. layout of room, lighting, good colour contrast • Planning of intervention involving the parent/carer, child, setting SENCO, key person and takes into account any existing medical information on vision and advice from a Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (QTVI). • Individual Child Plan (ICP) may be drawn up with SMART targets. • Half termly reviews of child's progress towards targets recorded on the ICP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers contribute to assessment and a broader understanding of the child's needs • Parents/carers give informed written consent for the involvement of external agencies. • Parents/carers invited to participate in target setting, monitoring progress and reviews, and may be involved in supporting targets in the home. • The ascertainable views of the child are taken account of. • Opportunities for parents/carers to work in partnership with practitioners to share knowledge and develop a consistent approach to meeting the visual needs of the child e.g. glasses care; seating arrangements, preferred distances etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grouping strategies used flexibly to enhance learning and access to the curriculum, and to focus available adult support where needed. • Additional adult attention and/or support for group activities where relevant. • Appropriate position considered for each activity. • Approaches used show acceptance and empathy for the child, support for their emotions, and aims to build positive relationship with them. • Emphasis on providing an enabling environment both inside and outside, with developmentally appropriate resources, and on differentiation for curriculum access. • Possible modifications to and differentiation in the setting, to ensure safety and access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and advice from QTVI (if available) is passed to all staff and parents. • One-off advice may be sought from the QTVI to carry out an assessment and inform planning. Adoption of a whole setting approach involving all staff who may come into contact with the child. • Additional adult attention and/or support for some activities, including ICP targets, from practitioners already working in the setting. • Supervision and monitoring of the ICP by SENCO. • Provision of the following, as needed, to accommodate child's learning characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some additional prompting, support to focus attention, manage change of activities. - Support for social interactions, communication, play with other children. - Willingness to make minor adaptations to physical environment to support learning and ensure safety.

Visual Impairment - Characteristics of Provision - Early Years Action Plus

Assessment, planning and review	Parents'/carers' and child's participation	Curriculum and teaching methods	Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment, planning and review may need to take account of the child's attendance at more than one setting. • Ongoing observation undertaken in order to understand child's current interests, development and learning needs that are additional to or different from what is usually provided for all children within the setting. Observation relates specifically to social interaction, communication, mobility and independence skills. • Planning intervention involving the parent/carer, child, setting SENCO, key person, and advising agencies including Qualified Teacher for the Visually Impaired (QTVI). • Individual Child Plan (ICP) is drawn up with SMART targets, which take account of specialist advice. • Half termly reviews of child's progress towards targets recorded on the ICP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers contribute to assessment. • Parents/carers give informed written consent for the involvement of external agencies. • Parents/carers invited to participate in target setting, monitoring progress and reviews, and may be involved in supporting targets in the home. • The ascertainable views of the child are taken account of. • Opportunities for parents/carers to work in partnership with practitioners and QTVI to share knowledge and develop a consistent approach to meeting the child's visual and learning needs. • Enhanced contact for parents with key 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice taken from QTVI on grouping strategies to ensure inclusion and access to the curriculum, and to focus available adult support where needed. • Additional adult attention and/or support for group activities. • Access to individually supported activities. This may involve working as part of a small group or one-to-one with an adult on targets. • Additional focus is given to activities which address the child's difficulties, using specific teaching approaches as necessary (e.g. a structured programme to develop fine motor skills, listening skills etc), developed in consultation with the QTVI. • Focus is on developing the skills needed to function in the early years setting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to interact socially with others; - to play appropriately with toys; - to move about independently and safely; - to develop a proper understanding of concepts. • Approaches used show acceptance and empathy for the child, support for their emotions, and aims to build positive relationship with them. • Emphasis on providing an enabling environment both inside and outside, with developmentally appropriate resources, with increased differentiation of curriculum access and materials, to reflect child's visual needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support, advice and training concerning the impact on social and emotional development and learning provided for all staff by the QTVI. • Advice is sought on an ongoing basis from the QTVI and informs planning. Planning takes account of other available advice from health professionals, such as physiotherapist or Occupational Therapist. • Adoption of a whole setting approach involving all staff who may come into contact with the child. • Additional adult attention and/or support for some activities, including ICP targets. • Provision of the following as needed to accommodate child's learning characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Designated quiet area to give child opportunities to concentrate on visual tasks. - Clearly defined and marked areas within the setting identifying different activity areas. - Ensuring additional time to see and act upon visual information. - Ensuring additional time to complete tasks successfully. • Commitment to liaison with parents / carers to ensure consistency of approach. • Time allocated for key professionals to liaise with external agencies

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input or attendance made by appropriate external agencies to reviews. • Consideration given to using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). 	<p>person in setting. Contact book or diary might be used to facilitate discussion of activities at home and in setting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility within the curriculum to make changes according to need. For example, planning participation or alternative provision at times of whole-group activities, physical activities, etc. as necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to ICT and specialist equipment as advised by QTVI e.g. angle board, tactile books etc • space to store specialist toys and/or equipment
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