What are special educational needs?

Children learn at different speeds and in different ways. Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children of the same age. They may have difficulties with:

- Reading, writing, number work or understanding information
- Expressing themselves or understanding what is being said to them
- Understanding and following rules and routines
- Making friends or relating to adults
- A medical condition
- Sight or hearing

What do we mean by disability?

The Equality Act (2010) defines disability as;

a) the person has a physical or mental impairment, and
b) the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

For our social care and short break services the working description for disability is: ‘the needs of the disabled child or young person are beyond those of a non-disabled child of the same age and means they are likely to require lifelong support in the future from statutory services.'

How are special educational needs identified?

Schools and early year’s settings such as nurseries have a responsibility to identify children with special educational needs (SEN) and make sure they get the right support as early as possible to help them learn and progress.
The nursery or school must tell you when it first starts giving this extra or different help to your child.

Health or care professionals may also identify special educational needs or disability. If a professional thinks your child has SEND, he or she must tell you and also tell us.

**What to do if you think your child has special educational needs**

If you are worried about your child’s development or behaviour, talk to the manager of your child’s nursery or preschool, or to your child’s teacher at school.

The [SEND Information, Advice and Support Service](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-information-advice-support-service) provided by the Parent Partnership Service can also help with impartial and confidential information and advice.

**Further information**

The Department for Education’s [SEND Code of Practice](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25) has detailed information on SEND and the help and support that schools, local authorities and health can provide. They have also produced [SEND: a guide for parents and carers](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-guide-for-parents-and-carers).