

# Practice Guidance for Early Years Setting SENDCOs

September 2024



## Version control

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Date	Details	Updated by
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## About this guidance

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This practice guidance aims to support all practitioners working with children in the Early Years who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

- It aims to outline the principles and requirements that are laid down in the statutory guidance, SEND Code of Practice (0-25) 2015.
- It aims to support Torbay Early Years settings in meeting the individual needs of all children in their care.
- For further support and advice, you can contact the Home Learning Environment and Early Years Team [www.earlyyears@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:www.earlyyears@torbay.gov.uk) or 01803 207895

All the forms and guidance are available on the Torbay Family Hub website [SEND Resources - Family Hub \(torbayfamilyhub.org.uk\)](https://www.torbayfamilyhub.org.uk)

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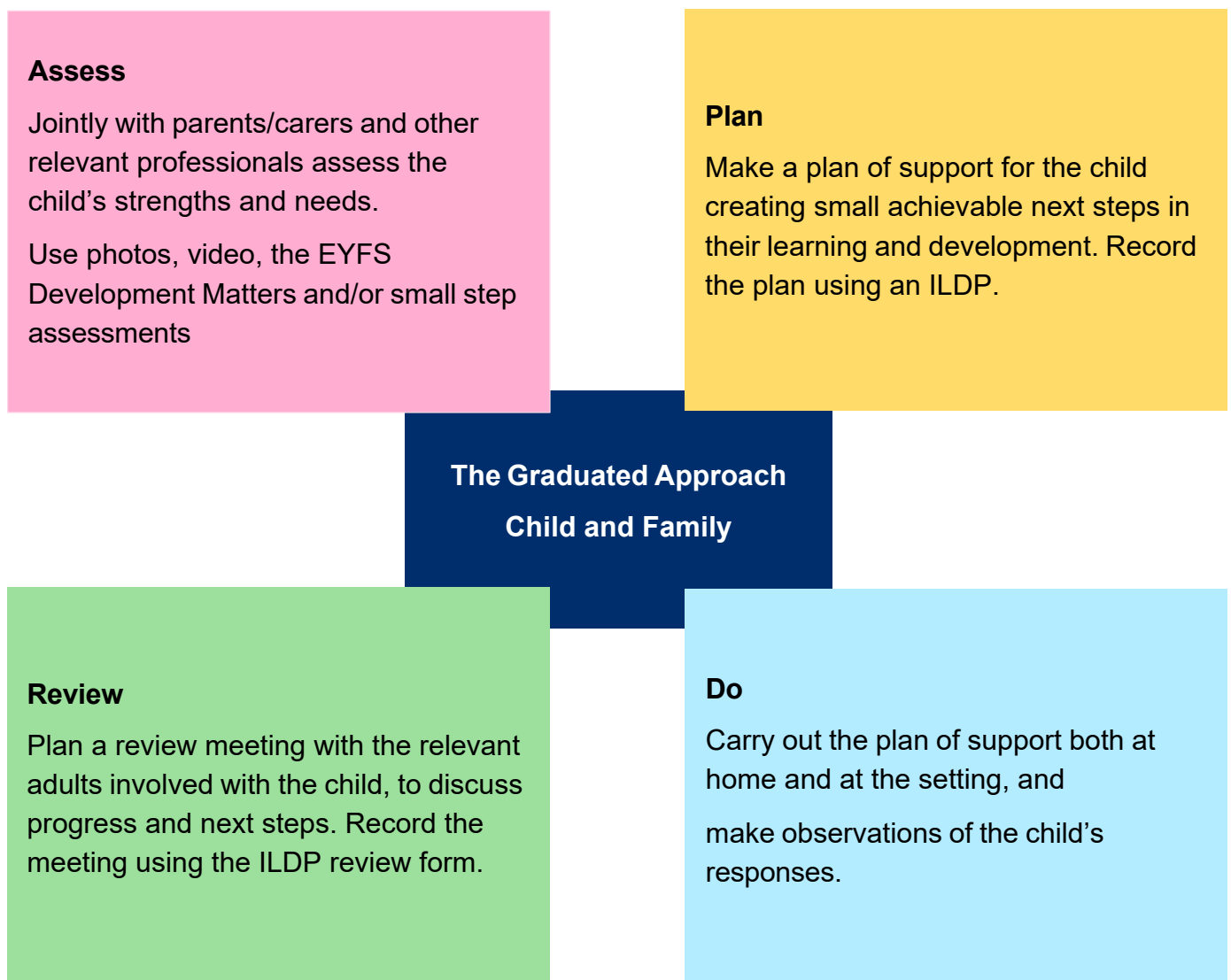
# Supporting Children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND): The Graduated Approach

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All children are individuals. They will progress at different rates and need different learning opportunities to reach their full potential. A child may just need time and support to develop rather than having special educational needs. Carefully differentiated learning opportunities within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum may allow a child to progress.

When a child is experiencing difficulties, it may be necessary to offer different opportunities or use alternative approaches to learning. If the child is not making adequate progress and is identified as having special educational needs, adults supporting the child will need to follow the Graduated Approach in the SEND Code of Practice 2015.

## The Graduated Approach



# Supporting Children with SEND using the Graduated Approach Cycle

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## Assess

This is when practitioners observe and identify a child as having additional needs. This is what is stated in the SEND Code of Practice:

“Where a child appears to be behind expected levels, or where a child’s progress gives cause for concern, practitioners should consider all the information about the child’s learning and development from within and beyond the setting, from formal checks, from practitioner observations and from any more detailed assessment of the child’s needs. From within the setting practitioners should particularly consider information on a child’s progress in communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development. Where any specialist advice has been sought from beyond the setting, this should also inform decisions about whether or not a child has SEN. All the information should be brought together with the observations of parents and considered with them.” (SEND Code of Practice 2015).

Use additional small step assessments to support your observations of the child in the developmental areas of concern, particularly the prime areas of learning. Small Step Assessments may be the Early Communication and Language Monitoring Tool or something more specific such as the Engagement Model both found here [SEND Resources - Family Hub \(torbayfamilyhub.org.uk\)](https://www.torbayfamilyhub.org.uk) or the Early Years SEND Assessment tools found here [Help for early years providers : SEND assessment guidance and resources](https://www.torbayfamilyhub.org.uk)

All documentation used to record the graduated approach cycle of support are identified in this document in bold italic type and found for your use here [SEND Resources - Family Hub \(torbayfamilyhub.org.uk\)](https://www.torbayfamilyhub.org.uk)

Assessment and observations should be guided and coordinated by the Setting Special Needs & Disability Coordinator (SENDCo)

## Plan

Practitioners and parents/carers then agree a plan of action that is additional and different from that provided as part of the setting’s usual curriculum and strategies. An ***‘Individual Learning and Development Plan’*** and/or ***‘Emotional Regulation Plan’*** is written, the child’s responses may be monitored using the ***‘weekly tracking sheet’*** and then reviewed on a regular basis. When the plan is reviewed with the parents/carers, the setting SENDCo will need to record the meeting using the ***‘Individual Learning and Development Plan Review’*** form. Parents/carers should always be sent a copy of the review meeting minutes following the meeting together. This is what is stated in the SEND Code of Practice:

“Where it is decided to provide SEN support, and having formally notified the parents, the practitioner and the SENDCo should agree, in consultation with the parent, the outcomes they are seeking, the interventions and support to be put in place, the

expected impact on progress, development or behaviour, and a clear date for review. Plans should consider the views of the child. The support and intervention provided should be selected to meet the outcomes identified for the child, based on reliable evidence of effectiveness, and provided by practitioners with relevant skills and knowledge. Any related staff development needs should be identified and addressed.

Parents should be involved in planning support and, where appropriate, in reinforcing the provision or contributing to progress at home.” (SEND Code of Practice 2015)

At this stage the setting SENDCo and parents/carers should agree to include the child on the setting’s SEND Register.

## Do

Setting SENDCos should refer to the ***Torbay Early Years Graduated Approach Toolkit SEND Resources - Family Hub (torbayfamilyhub.org.uk)*** to support them with strategy ideas of how to support the child and what interventions to put in place both at home and at the Early Years setting. There are other resources to support practitioners with strategies also found here ***SEND Resources - Family Hub (torbayfamilyhub.org.uk)*** This is what is stated in the SEND Code of Practice:

“The Early Years practitioner, usually the child’s key person, remains responsible for working with the child daily. With support from the SENDCo, they should oversee the implementation of the interventions or programmes agreed as part of SEN support. The SENDCo should support the practitioner in assessing the child’s response to the action taken, in problem solving and advising on the effective implementation of support.” (SEND Code of Practice 2015)

## Review

It is advisable to review individual targets set for very young children every half term or sooner. The setting SENDCo will need to arrange a meeting with the parents. This is what is stated in the SEND Code of Practice:

“The effectiveness of the support and its impact on the child’s progress should be reviewed in line with the agreed date. The impact and quality of the support should be evaluated by the practitioner and the SENDCo working with the child’s parents and considering the child’s views. They should agree any changes to the outcomes and support for the child in light of the child’s progress and development. Parents should have clear information about the impact of the support provided and be involved in planning next steps.

This cycle of action should be revisited in increasing detail and with increasing frequency, to identify the best way of securing good progress. At each stage parents should be engaged with the setting, contributing their insights to assessment and

planning. Intended outcomes should be shared with parents and reviewed with them, along with action taken by the setting, at agreed times.” (SEND Code of Practice 2015)

It is advisable, where possible, to include all the relevant professionals involved with the child at planned review meetings, so that a coordinated approach is taken. At each ILDP review meeting it is important to consider if the child needs to access more support from outside agencies, such as Early Help or Family Hub services. It might be relevant to make a request for support from the Home Learning Environment and Early Years Team [earlyyears@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:earlyyears@torbay.gov.uk) or [earlyyearssend@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:earlyyearssend@torbay.gov.uk)

After at least one cycle of the Graduated Approach, a Setting SENDCo may want to request extra funding to support the child’s access to the setting. This can be done using the guidance and **‘Activity Led Funding for Inclusion (ALFI) forms - Parts 1 and 2’** found here [Early Years additional funding for children with SEND \(ALFI and DAF\) - Family Hub \(torbayfamilyhub.org.uk\)](http://torbayfamilyhub.org.uk)

## Identifying a child as needing SEND support

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In the first instance, where there are concerns about an individual child, the setting SENDCo should act by

- Clearly identifying their needs through discussion with the parents/carers and carrying out observations and assessments
- Providing a supportive learning environment
- Working as a team of adults to provide collaborative verbal and non-verbal communication support
- Using the Early Years Graduated Approach Toolkit to help implement support strategies at the setting and at home

Where the concern about the child persists, and the SENDCo has followed the stepped Graduated Approach pathway, it might be appropriate to contact the Home Learning Environment and Early Years (HLE & EY) service in Torbay, for further support [earlyyears@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:earlyyears@torbay.gov.uk) or [earlyyearssend@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:earlyyearssend@torbay.gov.uk) :

“In identifying a child as needing SEN support, the Early Years practitioner, working with the setting SENDCo and the child’s parents, will have carried out an analysis of the child’s needs. This initial assessment should be reviewed regularly to ensure that support is matched to need. Where there is little or no improvement in the child’s progress, more specialist assessment may be called for from specialist teachers or from health, social services or other agencies beyond the setting. Where professionals are not already working with the setting, the SENDCo should contact them, with the parents’ agreement.” (SEND Code of Practice 2015)

# Support from the Home Learning Environment and Early Years (HLE & EY) Service

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The setting SENDCo can email the HLE & EY service and arrange an agreed telephone or video call to discuss the child of concern and the action taken so far.

Following this consultation, the setting SENDCo can expect some written advice in an email, based on the shared discussion with the setting SENDCO/Nursery Teacher. It will be expected that the suggested recommendations will be put into action.

Following a short period of time, if the child's needs continue to be of concern, the setting SENDCo can make further contact with the HLE & EYs professional and a visit to the setting can be arranged. The aim of these visits is to observe the child of concern and/or discuss the impact of the interventions of support already put in place and support setting SENDCos with further inclusive practice, including targeted support strategies.

Other support for the child and family may also need to be considered such as Early Help, intervention groups at the Family Hub or a referral to health or education services. It might be impactful for the early years setting to participate in training opportunities both locally and online.

## Case File

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The graduated approach should be led and coordinated by the setting SENDCo working with and supporting individual practitioners in the setting. A case file for the child should be set up to include, a tracking log recording all the actions taken and copies of ILDPs, emotional regulation plans and reviews, letters, reports and assessments & observations.

This file will then become a clear chronological record of the Early Years setting's SEND Support for the child and can provide good evidence for a request for further support if it is needed.

Children receiving SEN Support must be on the setting's '**SEND Register**'.

## SEND Register

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Each Early Years setting must have a SEND Register.

### What is a SEND Register?

The SEND register is a list of all the children in the setting who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or a disability in the four broad areas of need: Communication and Interaction, Social, Emotional and Mental Health, Cognition and Learning and Physical and Sensory. This list makes it easier for the SENDCo and staff to monitor those children who need extra help.

### Which children should be placed on the SEND Register?

Any child identified as having a special educational need and/or disability and who needs more help than their peers to make progress in at least **two** areas of SEND need, should be placed on the SEND register. Before a child is placed on the SEND register, this **MUST** be discussed with the child's parents/carers. The parents/carers **MUST** also be informed in writing, usually in the Team Around the Family or ILDP review meeting minutes.



## What does this mean for the child?

If a child is placed on the SEND Register, the extra help they receive should be set out in an ILDP or Emotional Regulation Plan, so that it is clear what help the child is receiving and how often.

## Will the child need to stay on the SEND Register?

Some children with significant needs will be on the SEND Register for the duration of their time at the setting, because they will always need additional help and support. Other children may only need something additional for a short amount of time. If they no longer need any help above and beyond that of the usual provision, then they should be removed from the SEND Register. This MUST be in discussion with parents/carers.

## Induction & Transition

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Sometimes parents/carers request a place at an Early Years setting for their child who has an identified need. In this case it is important to hold a transition meeting for the parents/carers and other practitioners already involved with the child, preferably before the child starts at the setting. In this way the setting SENDCo can carefully plan and provide the most appropriate level of support for the child to be successfully included.

Setting SENDCos can use their own transition plan format or the ILDP Review meeting form. This plan can be used when the child moves onto another Early Years setting. It is also useful and meaningful for parents/carers, if a One Page Profile is completed about the child with SEND at regular intervals, to inform all the adults working with the child, how best to support them.

It is important to plan and arrange a transition meeting for young children with identified SEND starting school, please follow the recommendations laid out in the Early Years Transition Charter and timeline.

## SEND Funding for young children with SEND

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After at least one cycle of the Graduated Approach, a Setting SENDCo may want to request extra funding to support the child's access to the setting, Activity led Funding for Inclusion (ALFI). This can be done using the guidance and '**Activity Led Funding for Inclusion (ALFI) forms - Parts 1 and 2**' found here [Early Years additional funding for children with SEND \(ALFI and DAF\) - Family Hub \(torbayfamilyhub.org.uk\)](https://www.torbayfamilyhub.org.uk/early-years-additional-funding-for-children-with-send-alfi-and-daf)

For young children whose parents/carers are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, Early Years settings can apply for Disability Access Fund. Guidance, criteria and the application form can all be found here [Disability Access Fund \(DAF\) - Family Hub](https://www.torbayfamilyhub.org.uk/disability-access-fund-daf)

## Writing reports

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Setting SENDCos may be asked to write a report on a child with SEND for:

- Multi-agency meetings.
- Evidence for making a request for an EHC needs assessment.
- Sharing information about children with parents and other professionals.

For each area of development describe the child's needs and any effective strategies that you have been able to put in place.

Be clear about the type and level of support you are giving for the child to be successfully included and make the relevant progress. For example, using picture prompts to support changes of activities; using Makaton with the child to support their understanding; giving hand under hand help to hold a cup; using a standing frame to access the water play. Describe what the child is good at and enjoys doing. Always remain objective and factual.

## Requesting an Education, Health and Care needs assessment

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“Where, despite the setting having taken relevant and purposeful action to identify, assess and meet the special educational needs of the child, the child has not made expected progress, the setting should consider requesting an Education, Health and Care needs assessment”. (SEND Code of Practice 2015)

It is important to seek the support and guidance from an educational psychologist when considering further support for some children, as they near a school start. The educational psychology service can offer a consultation with the parents/carers to first discuss with them and the setting SENDCo, what support is already in place for the child; what has been effective and what the aspirations are for the child moving forward. You will need to complete the referral form for this service found here [Educational Psychology & Specialist Teaching Service \(TEPATS\) - Family Hub](#) Together, a decision will be made if further intervention is needed at this time.

For a few children, it may be appropriate to make a request for an EHC needs assessment. Guidance and information about this can be found here [Education, Health & Care \(EHC\) needs assessments and Education, Health & Care plans \(EHCPs\) - Family Hub \(torbayfamilyhub.org.uk\)](#)

The Early Years Advisory Teachers / Portage Service will also support the setting SENDCo, giving guidance about the process. Deciding to make a request for an EHCP needs to be done in consultation with the parents/carers and educational psychologist and a referral to this service should be the done before requesting an EHCP.

## The Role of the Early Years Advisory Teacher (EYAT) for Inclusion

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The Early Years Advisory Teacher for Inclusion will work in close partnership with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinators (SENDCos) in Early Years Settings to enable them to follow the 'Graduated Approach' set out in the SEND Code of Practice 2015 and this will include.

- Supporting setting SENDCos with early identification of concerns and assessment of need through virtual discussion support, visits to the SENDCo or observing children at play.

- Supporting setting SENDCos to plan and implement appropriate intervention and support for individual children in consultation with parents/carers.
- Supporting setting SENDCos to explain to parents/carers how any early intervention and support put in place will benefit their children and help them to reach their full potential.
- Reinforcing the need for setting SENDCos to consult with parents/carers at each step and reassure them that confidentiality between parents/carers, the setting and other agencies will be respected at all times.
- Supporting setting SENDCos with referral to other agencies e.g. educational psychology, health services and signposting parents/carers to universal support services including Early Help.
- Informing setting SENDCos about the importance of working with local impartial information, advice and support services, to promote effective work with parents of children in the Early Years such as SENDIASS [Sendiass Torbay | Torbay](#)
- Supporting setting SENDCos to plan for children with SEND to transfer between Early Years provision and schools by following the Torbay Transition Charter and timelines.
- Supporting the setting SENDCos with requesting an EHC Plan for individual children and writing reports as part of this process
- Supporting setting SENDCos to develop links with existing SENDCo networks such as the Torbay Early Years SENDCo Forum.
- Strengthening the links between the settings, parents, schools, social care and health services
- Developing and disseminating good practice
- Supporting the development and delivery of training both for individual settings and on a wider basis

## The Role of the Early Years Setting SENDCo

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The Early Years SENDCo has a key role in supporting colleagues and coordinating the response of the setting to children with SEND. The Early Years SENDCo role will vary depending on the size, structure and employer's requirements in the setting. The following is an overview of the typical role. Further details can be obtained from the 0-25 Special educational needs and disability code of practice 2015:

### **Ensuring all practitioners in the setting understand their responsibilities to children with SEND and the setting's approach to identifying and meeting SEND**

The Early Years SENDCo will:

- Work with the manager of the setting to regularly review the SEN and disability policy and practice within the setting and agree how it will be implemented.
- Be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the setting's SEND policy, and for coordinating provision across the setting.
- Implement SEND support and the graduated approach of assess, plan, do, review to meet the outcomes identified for the child

- Support individual practitioners in implementing the approach for individual children.
- Meet the requirements for record-keeping in a way that supports a participative decision-making process.
- Draw on a range of sources, including the views of the child, supported by reliable evidence of effectiveness, to inform their advice and support to colleagues on different approaches to improving children's progress.

### **Advising and supporting colleagues**

The Early Years SENDCo will:

- Support practitioners to assess their skills and competencies, identify any gaps and implement next steps in professional development &
- Ensure all practitioners in the setting understand:
  - Their responsibilities to children with SEND
  - How to work actively and effectively within the Assess Plan Do Review SEND support in Early Years cycle.
  - The setting's approach to identifying and meeting SEND
  - How the setting: responds to any cause for concern and identifies and responds to special educational needs.
  - How the setting works in partnership with parents to identify a child as having a SEND.
  - How the practitioner and the SENDCo agree, in consultation with the parent and the child, the outcomes they are seeking for the child.
- Identify and use training and other sources of support available to help explain the duties to colleagues.
- Link with others who have a role in supporting the development and delivery of training both for individual settings and on a wider basis.

### **Ensuring parents are closely involved throughout and that their insights inform action taken by the setting.**

The Early Years SENDCo will:

- Make sure parents receive the information, advice and support that they need to participate in the SEND decision-making process.
- Ensure parents are closely involved throughout and that their insights inform action taken by the setting.
- Involve parents in the discussion of any early concerns, in identifying any SEN, and agreeing:
  - The outcomes being sought for the child
  - The interventions and support to be put in place
  - The expected impact on progress, development, behaviour
  - Date for review

### **Liaising with professionals or agencies beyond the setting**

The Early Years SENDCo will:

- Understand the local offer, including the provision that the Local Authority expects to be available from providers of all relevant Early Years education.
- Understand the support available including:
  - education
  - health and social care services for disabled children and children with SEND
  - services assisting providers to support young children with medical conditions
  - childcare for disabled children and children with SEND
  - services providing parents and children with information, advice and support on SEND and disability
  - support groups who can support parent carers of disabled children.
- Link with the local authority to liaise over individual children and links on wider strategic issues such as securing sufficient expertise and experience on SEND and disability locally
- Understand how funding supports settings in meeting children's SEND and disability.
- Liaise with professionals or agencies beyond the setting, including, but not limited to:
  - SEND support or learning support services including the 'Local Offer'
  - sensory support services or specialist teachers
  - Therapies such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy
  - support available to parents to aid their child's development at home, including such services as Portage
  - Independent Advice and Support Services (SENDIASS)
  - Local voluntary agencies that provide support to children and their families.
  - Social Care Services
  - Area SENDCo, inclusion officer, or equivalent where available

### **Continually develop own practice**

Effective practitioners reflect on their own practice and undertake continuous professional development. The Early Years SENDCo will:

- understand:
  - own responsibilities to children with SEND, their carers/parents
  - the setting's approach to identifying and meeting SEND
  - how to determine reliability of evidence of the effectiveness of provision
- assess own skills and competencies, identify any gaps and next steps in professional development.
- identify and use training and other sources of support to address own development needs.
- keep up to date with meeting the setting's needs.

### **Relevant skills and knowledge**

There is a range of resources and advice, information and training available, for example:

- Torbay Family Hub Local Offer [Torbay SEND Local Offer - Family Hub \(torbayfamilyhub.org.uk\)](https://www.torbayfamilyhub.org.uk)
- Dingley's Promise Inclusion Training, Free to Torbay Early Years Settings [Training - Dingley's Promise](#)
- Speech and Language UK [Home - Speech and Language UK: Changing young lives](#) supports everyone who works with children and young people in England to support their speech, language and communication.
- The Autism Education Trust [Resources to Support Autistic Children and Young People \(autismeducationtrust.org.uk\)](https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk) for children on the autism spectrum.
- National Sensory Impairment Partnership, Natsip, for children with vision impairment, hearing impairment and multi-sensory impairment.
- The Early Years SEND Partnership Programme [About the EYSEND Partnership \(councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk\)](https://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk) provides learning resources to support the development of practice in relation to young children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties; autism; Sensory Processing and speech, language and communication needs.
- Nafen [Early Years | Nafen](#) hosts an online portal, of Early Years SEND Resources which provides access to information, resources and training to meet the needs of children with SEN and disabilities to support Early Years practitioners

## Forms and Guidance

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All the forms named in this practice guidance can be viewed and downloaded from the Torbay Family Hub, Local Offer website found here [Torbay SEND Local Offer - Family Hub \(torbayfamilyhub.org.uk\)](https://www.torbayfamilyhub.org.uk)

This document can be made available in other languages and formats. For more information, please contact [earlyyears@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:earlyyears@torbay.gov.uk)