

# Early Years and Special Educational Needs



## A Guide for Parents & Carers

**DIAS2** August 2015  
[www.devonias.org.uk](http://www.devonias.org.uk)  
**01392 383080**

funded by  
**Devon**  
County Council 

The logo for Devon County Council, featuring the text "Devon County Council" in a bold, sans-serif font, with a stylized green leaf graphic to the right.

## The SEND code of Practice says:

Early Years providers must have arrangements in place to support children with SEN or disabilities. These arrangements should include a clear approach to identifying and responding to SEN. The benefits of early identification are widely recognised – identifying need at the earliest point, and then making effective provision, improves long-term outcomes for children. *SEN Code of Practice 5.4*

For many children, an early years setting is their first experience of learning with a group of children away from their home and family. Your child will be looked after by the staff and practitioners at the setting. They have a responsibility for supporting every child's learning, including children with special educational needs (SEN) and they will have regard to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework. The EYFS sets the standard that all Ofsted registered early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. You can ask staff at your child's setting to explain more about this and further information can be found in the parents' area at:

[www.foundationyears.org.uk](http://www.foundationyears.org.uk)

You can also learn more about early years and special educational needs and disabilities via Devon's Local Offer at:

[www.devon.gov.uk/send](http://www.devon.gov.uk/send)

## What is an early years setting?

It may be a private day nursery, a pre-school, a nursery class at a school or a child-minder. A parent and toddler group is different as here parents and carers meet together and stay with their children.

## How will the setting check my child's progress?

Your child will have a progress check between the age of 2 and 3 years, their progress will be reviewed, and you will be given a short written summary of their development. As well as this formal check, the setting should assess your child's progress against the EYFS on an ongoing basis. If there are any significant emerging concerns (or identified SEN or disability) practitioners should work with you to develop a targeted plan to support your child.

## What happens if my child needs extra help?

All children develop and make progress at different rates. The early years

practitioners will talk to you about your child's strengths and any areas of difficulty where they might need extra help. If you or the setting is concerned that your child is not making expected progress it is possible they may have Special Educational Needs (SEN). If this is the case, your child may need support which is additional to, or different from, other children the same age. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years is the guidance that early years settings, who receive local authority funding, should follow in such cases.

The Code of Practice identifies four broad areas of need:

- Communication and interaction
- Cognition and learning
- Social, emotional and mental health
- Sensory and/or physical needs

One or more of these may be relevant to your child's needs and they will inform any plan of support that is put in place for them.

## What should I do if my child already has identified needs before starting at the setting?

### The SEND Code of Practice states that:

Where a child has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than their peers, or a disability that prevents or hinders a child from making use of the facilities in the setting and requires special educational provision, the setting should make that provision. *COP 5.31*

Talk to the lead professional involved with your child about how information will be shared with the Early Years setting, and how provision will be made. The SENCO at the Early Years Setting should work with you to identify outcomes for your child, and to agree on what interventions and support should be put in place.

## How will my child be supported in an Early Years setting?

**SEN support** is the standard term used to cover all aspects of support provided in the setting. This means that a child will be receiving additional or different support to meet his/her needs. Settings have a duty to tell you if your child needs SEN support and they must involve you and your child as fully as possible in any decisions.

In Devon the SEN support your child needs will be identified through the **Devon Assessment Framework (DAF)** process.

For more information please see our leaflet Special Educational Needs Support in School and our short guide to the DAF process

Following such an assessment, your child's needs, agreed outcomes and support can be set out for them in a plan called a **My Plan**. This plan will be reviewed regularly and will continue until the support is no longer needed, the plan ceases or your child's needs are assessed as being more complex and longer term. If this is the case, a statutory education health and care (EHC) assessment may be requested from the Local Authority and this can lead to a statutory **EHC plan** being written.

## What can we expect from SEN support?

It is recognised that early identification and intervention are an important part of the process and, in practice, this happens through ongoing **assessing, planning, doing** and **reviewing**. This cycle is known as the '*graduated approach*' and it works alongside the aims of the EYFS to provide your child with effective strategies and support which can help them to progress and to meet the outcomes that have been agreed between you and the professionals involved.

For more information see our other leaflets - **Education Health and Care Statutory Assessments and Plans** and **Assessments, Plans and Reviews**

## What is a SENCo?

A SENCo is a special educational needs co-ordinator. Each early years setting may have a designated SENCo or a member of staff who is responsible for leading on SEN. The role of the SENCo includes ensuring that you as a parent or carer are closely involved and that your views are taken into account when decisions are being made.

## How can we be involved and where can we get support?

Starting on the educational journey with your child can seem a daunting task but it is important that you are involved. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice stresses the importance of taking into account the views of parents, children and young people - including in the developing and reviewing of any plans.

For more information see our leaflets - **Assessments, plans and reviews** and **Your child or young person has a view too**, these will help you to learn more about how you can be involved.

## Starting Primary School

Before applying for a primary school place, you will be able to visit school to find out if the provision they offer would be suited to your child's needs. The SENCO or your child's key person at the early years setting will play an important part in planning for children with SEN to transfer to primary school, and sharing information with the school. The setting should ensure that you are involved in this process, and that your knowledge of your child and their needs are also included.

You can find out how to apply for a primary school place online at [www.devon.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.devon.gov.uk/admissions). Alternatively, you can phone the admissions team on **0345 155 1019** for a copy of the **First Step** booklet and admission form. These are the only ways you can apply for a school place.

In exceptional circumstances admission to a reception class can be delayed until the next academic year. More information about this and deferred admission dates can be found at [www.devon.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.devon.gov.uk/admissions)

## Will my child receive SEN Support at school?

SEN Support in schools follows a similar process (or graduated approach) to the one offered by early years settings. Schools in Devon will also be involved in the DAF process and must have regard to the same Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years. If the DAF process has already been started at your child's early years setting, this information will be passed on to the SENCO at their primary school. You can contact the SENCO at your child's named primary school, in advance of their start date, to discuss any concerns you may have and to help develop any plan of support that may be required.

If your child starts primary school with an EHC plan already in place, the support that is identified in the plan must be provided by the school. The plan will be reviewed at least every 12 months, and you will have the opportunity to share your views on how the support is working, and whether any changes need to be made.

For more information on EHC plans see our leaflet – **Education Health and Care (EHC), Statutory Assessments and Plans**

## How is my child's Early Years Education paid for?

You can find out more about Early Years Funding for 2, 3 and 4 year olds on the government website:

<https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-and-education-for-2-to-4-year-olds>

## How can Devon Information Advice & Support help?

We can support parents and carers as they guide their children along this new special educational needs and disability journey.

We can support you to:

- learn more about SEN support in early years settings and schools
- understand the process and paperwork
- express your views
- discuss the impact on your child
- prepare for meetings
- make contact with other groups and services and understand their roles

...and much more!



Contact Devon Information Advice & Support on **01392 383080** or email **devonias@devon.gov.uk**

We have further leaflets and information online at:

**[www.devonias.org.uk](http://www.devonias.org.uk)**

You can also find us on Facebook

If you would like this document in another language or format, or you need an interpreter please call **01392 383080**