**A picture containing game

Description automatically generated** 

**Newcastle SEND Descriptors of Need**

**Part 1**

**Introduction**

****  
Version 2 April 2024

**Introduction**

The SEND descriptors of need or ranges have been developed:

* to ensure a common language to describe the support expected for children with SEND
* to provide a core framework for all practitioners working with children and young people to help assess and identify the needs of children and young people, and to put in place appropriate support
* to give greater clarity for parents and carers about their child/young person’s needs and how their child should be supported at school.

Descriptors of Need at various levels or ranges can be a useful tool for SENCOs, families and schools/services to assess and identify the needs of a child. This assessment can provide information about what support to put in place to support the child’s progress. It is important to consider a child’s needs within the context of their strengths.

The starting point in determining and describing the needs of CYP with SEND is the four areas of the [SEND\_Code\_of\_Practice\_January\_2015.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf)

This document was co- produced with parent/carers and representatives from Education, Health and Social Care at a series of workshops held in 2021 and 2022. A range of principles were identified which provide the foundations of the Newcastle Descriptors of Need.

The following factors will also need to be considered when measuring attainment, progress:

* Summer term birthdays (particularly in the case of younger children),
* Attendance rates, both recently and longer term,
* Number of school/setting transitions.

Schools/settings will need to evidence all of their interventions and the impact of these through a SEND Support Plan and other evidence as part of ‘Assess, Plan, Do, Review’ cycles. A Graduated Response to SEN is expected as outlined in the SEND Code of Practice 2015, and through the review cycle it is expected that children will move between ranges at different points during their journey through education. Some children and young people will make good progress with timely intervention and support so that Descriptors of Need will no longer be required.

This is best practice nationally and Ofsted require this level of evidence of input and impact.

It is expected that the SEND Support Plan provides evidence of how the Newcastle Universally Available Provision for Early Years and the Universally Available Provision provision for schools has been implemented and includes well-evidenced interventions with clear entry and exit points. Targets should be SMART:

* Specific
* Measurable
* Achievable
* Relevant
* Time-limited

Parent/carers and children and young people should be at the centre of any target setting and personalised learning goals.

The Early Years documents relate to children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) from birth to the term after their fifth birthday. Descriptors have been developed for the following areas of need:

* Speech, Language, Communication and Interaction Needs
* Cognition and Learning Needs
* Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs
* Sensory Needs

For schools and post 16 settings, Descriptors have been developed for the following areas of need:

* Communication and Interaction: Social, Communication and Neurodiversity
* Communication and Interaction: Speech, Language and Communication Needs
* Cognition and Learning Needs
* Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs
* Sensory and/or Physical Needs:
  + Deafness
  + Visual Impairment
  + Multi-Sensory Needs

The Descriptors for Physical and Medical Needs have been developed for children and young people across all age ranges.

In some cases, a child will fall into more than one range, or will have needs in more than one area.

The school/setting will need to study the ranges and to highlight where the greatest need is, as well as strength. This may change over time and as the child develops.

There will be specific times such as during transition where a child’s needs may change because of the differing environments, changes and new expectations and/or, in some cases, due to experiences of trauma.

The ranges are a guide and provide a framework for the evidence that will be required to show how a child is being supported, why and to what effects.

## Preparation for Adulthood (PfA)

Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) starts at the earliest stage in life through the development of early communication, feeding, making choices to becoming an independent adult. Curriculum in Early Years settings and schools should be shaped around the needs of the child and young person, regardless of any disability. The PfA outcomes give a clear framework for a curriculum model that can be developed for 0–25-year-olds, using the excellent practice that is already in our settings. It will also support effective transition across and between settings building upon the PfA outcomes, working closely with parents and in shaping EHC plans that are realistic and prepare children and young people with SEND for their next stage.

Suggestions in relation to PfA outcomes can be found at the end of each area of need.

## The Ranges

The levels of needs progress from range 1 through to at least ranges 5 and 6, whilst some go beyond to 7.

The ranges are colour-coded throughout the school section of the guidance as follows:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

## Identifying the Range: A Guide for those Using the Descriptors of Need

**Step 1**: Read the descriptors in each document and identify those that best describe your child. You may find it useful to print off a copy of these and highlight ones that apply. A multiagency approach, involving the child and family is best practice and will help you to best understand the child and their context.

**Step 2:** Use the SEND guidance descriptor information (Description of Need) in the first column of each range to think about how the child’s individual profile affects their access to the curriculum and setting, their wellbeing and functioning.

**Steps 1 and 2** above should enable those involved to make a judgement about which range the child is at currently. It is important to recognise that these ranges can alter either because the child’s profile changes or because of context changes such as times of transition/ school/setting placement.

The ranges are intended as a guide for settings. In reality, a child’s development across the prime areas may be difficult to map directly onto the different ranges. In these cases, some children may sit ‘between’ ranges.

If this occurs, professional judgement **must** be considered when reviewing the level of support that may be needed. In each of the ranges, all those involved with the child should consider the overarching range descriptor and information in both the ‘Assessment and Planning’ and the ‘Teaching and Learning Strategies/Curriculum and Interventions’ sections.

The child’s developmental profile must **not be taken in isolation.**

## Using this Guidance to Support Learning

Once the range has been established, professionals will find advice about how to support the learning of children at each range.

Quality First Teaching will provide a firm basis upon which to use the additional strategies identified at each range. Strategies and advice from earlier ranges need to be utilised alongside more specialised information as the ranges increase.

Specialist health interventions may also be required at any level.

You may find it useful to complete the overall assessment of a child’s needs on the template at Appendix 1.

**Appendix 1: Overall Assessment**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Ranges** | | | | |  |  |  |
|  | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **Comments** |
| **Early years** | | | | | | | | |
| Cognition and Learning |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Communication and Interaction: Social, Communication and Neurodiversity |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Communication and Interaction: Speech, Language and Communication Needs |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Social Emotional and Mental Health |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sensory: Deafness |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sensory: Visual Impairment |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Multi-sensory needs |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Physical and medical needs |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Primary and Secondary** | | | | | | | | |
| Cognition and Learning |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Communication and Interaction: Social, Communication and Neurodiversity |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Communication and Interaction: Speech, Language and Communication Needs |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Social Emotional and Mental Health |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sensory: Deafness |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sensory: Visual Impairment |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Multi-sensory needs |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Physical and medical needs |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Post 16** | | | | | | | | |
| Cognition and Learning |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Communication and Interaction: Social, Communication and Neurodiversity |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Communication and Interaction: Speech, Language and Communication Needs |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Social Emotional and Mental Health |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sensory: Deafness |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sensory: Visual Impairment |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Multi-sensory needs |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Physical and medical needs |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |