

# Smart Targets

When a child needs something additional to, or different from, the majority of children it is important to have documentation in the form of a personalised individual plan (SEND Support Plan) to ensure that a person-centred approach is adopted. This should form part of the graduated approach to improve outcomes and attainment for children with a special education need or disability (SEND), measure interventions and support parental engagement.

Solihull Early Years Team suggest the Early Years SEND Support Plan (SSP) <https://www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2024/02/Solihull-EY-SEND-Support-Plan-BLANK-.docx> which can be used when creating individual plans. Within this document the 'Plan' for learning should be set as clear SMART targets. SMART targets are targets that are **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound** whilst also being personal to the child. They should be set as small steps towards the child meeting their long-term outcomes and be used as part of a graduated approach to supporting children in consultation with parents and the child.

## SPECIFIC

As part of the planning process, it is important to consider what specifically the child will be accomplishing by their target. The outcome should be broken down into a small 'next step' that is personal to the child. Good support resources to use when planning targets are Solihull's '[Graduated Approach](#)' document and the '[Solihull Early Years SEND Assessment Toolkit](#)'. It is important that clear language is used when setting targets. They should describe exactly what the child will be able to do to be successful.

These are some words that are often used in targets that are unclear and therefore not specific:

- Understand
- Listen
- Know
- Enjoy

As these words are not specific, they are open to interpretation and cannot be measured. For example, how would we know that a child has understood a concept or has enjoyed a story that has been read to them?

Instead use words that are clear and specific such as:

- Name
- Point to
- Look towards
- Reach towards
- Construct
- Crawl
- Walk
- Run
- Catch
- Find
- Match
- Read
- Recall
- Retell
- Give
- Count
- Label
- Repeat

## MEASURABLE

To show that children are making progress practitioners must identify that targets have been achieved. Therefore, when setting a target there must be a measurable factor to clearly show during times of review whether the target has been successful. Often the level of success is stated by how many times the child responds successfully out of the number of times they have practised, so the target may include a frequency measure to decide if the target has been successful during the review period. For example, if the target is for Mae to catch a large ball from a distance of two metres the target might be changed to 'Mae will catch a large ball 3 out of 5 times, thrown to her from a distance of 2 metres'.

## ACHIEVABLE

It is important that targets are achievable, and it is possible that the child will be able to reach the target by a given date. Considering this will help in deciding whether the next step is suitable within the given time or in fact a future aim.

## REALISTIC

Targets must be developmentally appropriate for the child and therefore a genuine next step for them.

## TIME BOUND

SMART targets are always bound to a date in which the target will be reviewed to assess progress.

It is important to ensure that targets are used when planning for children and not aims. An aim is a long-term goal whereas a target is a statement of what the child can achieve within a given time. For example, if the aim for Clive is to know the names of colours, the target might be for 'Clive to point to a red wooden block when asked by his keyworker, when presented with 2 red wooden bricks and a yellow wooden brick on 3 out of 5 occasions'.

## Key considerations when setting SMART targets

- How many targets will be set?
- Is the target one that can be 'seen, heard, counted or measured'?
- How often does the target activity need to be carried out?
- What tools/materials/resources do you use to support you to develop these?
- What progress do you hope to see as a result of the action taken?
- How have you reflected the child's voice?
- How will you show the child they are successful? E.g. praise, reward, special activity
- How will you record progress?
- When will the target be reviewed?
- Consider how this approach can be carried out at home?
- How have you involved parents?

## Examples of targets that are not SMART

Ben will make a choice.

David will enjoy playing with his friends.

Henry will communicate when he wants more.

Alice will know 2D shapes.

Mark will respond to an adult.

Jason will join in for a short activity.

Laura's vocabulary will improve.

## Example of a SMART target:

x's name will (describe what the child will do) on how many occasions.

Arlo will request more by using the sign 'more', when his key worker blows bubbles to him during 1:1 time, on 2 out of 5 occasions.

Using this simple format will help you ensure your targets are SMART. It is important that clear language is used when setting targets. They should describe exactly what the child will be able to do to be successful.

For more examples of SMART Targets, please see our [SMART TARGET EXAMPLES](#) document.