

## What is The Graduated Approach?

**This document explains the graduated approach. It outlines Solihull's approach to supporting children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) in the early years.**

There is a government approach to SEND that is outlined in a document called [The Code of Practice](#). This document tells all local authorities what their duties and responsibilities are towards children with SEND and their families. Solihull is committed to all teams, agencies and settings following the graduated approach. This aims to ensure all children with SEND have access to the correct support at the best possible time. The [graduated approach](#) outlines the Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) support cycle.

The Solihull graduated approach early years guidance has four levels, these are:

1. **Universal support**
2. **Setting support**
3. **Specialist support**
4. **Statutory support**

**Universal support** – this means all the things that are available to all children in the early years. This includes access to a health visitor, funded places at a local nursery, etc.

**Setting support** - is when a child has *emerging SEND*. This means that they may need a little more help than most children. They will need some targeted adjustments and extra support strategies. Their parents may value more advice. This support may be from the community nursery nurses (who are linked to the Health Visitor team), from the Early Years Team home support, or if a child is in nursery, from the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) in the nursery. A setting can apply for level one [Early Years Inclusion Fund](#) to help pay for the extra support they are putting in place. Settings will need to record their graduated approach; they will write what they do on a SEND support plan, and this will be included as evidence towards an application for inclusion funding.

**Specialist support** – this begins if a child has had setting support but has not made progress. The setting will ask for support from a specialist. This may include referrals to a variety of different specialists for example, Speech and Language Therapists, Area SENCos, Occupational Therapists or support from Solihull's Specialist Inclusion Support Service (SISS). These are known as outside agencies. The outside agencies will give advice to families and setting staff about how to support the child's development. The setting can apply for additional early education fund, [Early Years Inclusion Fund](#), to help them pay for the support they put in place to support the child.

**Statutory Support**- a very small number of children with a high level of SEND, who have had specialist support for a while and still are not making progress, may need an Education and Healthcare Plan (EHCP). This is when the local authority agrees to do a full assessment of the child's needs and write a plan of what support should be in place. At this stage the local authority may also agree extra funding for the child's setting or school to help meet the child's needs.

Children may move both up and down through the levels of support of the graduated approach.

For example, a child may receive a EHCP but make so much progress that they no longer need one, so they would move back to specialist or setting support level.

A big part of the graduated approach is something called the Assess, Plan, Do, Review, graduated approach cycle. This describes how settings decide what support is needed and how they provide evidence to ask for more support or funding. Simply put the setting staff **assess** a child's development and then write a support **plan** with clear targets. The support in the plan is put into place (**do**). After an agreed time, the plan is **reviewed** to check what is working well and what needs changing. Dependent on this review, a child may move up or down through the graduated approach. Please see examples below:

Example one – A setting, and parents are concerned that a child has a delay in talking. The setting SENCo has put a support plan in place which has targets and strategies to support the child. At the review of the support plan, the child has made very little progress. The setting SENCo (with parental consent) refers the child to the Speech and Language Therapists for further specialist support.

Example two – A child was significantly delayed in three areas of development. The setting was receiving advice and support from the Area SENCo Team (specialist level). At the review of the support plan, the child has made good progress and is no longer significantly delayed in three areas. The child closes to the Area SENCo Team and moves back to setting support level.

To apply for additional funding, settings working with children with SEND need to evidence that the graduated approach is being followed, and that the Access, Plan, Do, Review cycle is being completed and recorded. In Solihull we have an Early Years SEND Assessment Toolkit (SAT) and an Early Years SEND Support Plan (SSP) document that we suggest professionals use to provide this evidence. Setting staff should always share all paperwork with parent and include them in the graduated approach letting them have a real say as to what the targets for their child should be and helping assess their child's progress.

The [Solihull local offer](#) webpages give further guidance. You can also find out more about the [graduated approach](#) for older children in school.