



7.3.3 The Four broad areas of need

The SEND Code of Practice states:

“A detailed assessment of need should ensure that the full range of an individual’s needs is identified, not simply the primary need. The support provided to an individual should always be based on a full understanding of their particular strengths and needs, and seek to address them using well-evidenced interventions targeted at their areas of difficulty and, where necessary, specialist equipment and software.”

- Section 6.27, Code of Practice

The four broad areas of need give an overview of the range of needs that a child or young person (CYP) may have, they are an indicator of the different needs that should be planned for. The purpose of identification is not to give the CYP a ‘label’ as in practice CYP may have needs that cut across all four areas and we know from working and listening to CYP and their families that every child and young person is different. By considering the four broad areas of need, within a graduated approach (see [SEN support in schools and settings \(graduated approach\) | South Gloucestershire \(southglos.gov.uk\)](#)), practitioners can assess need and work with parents/carers and the CYP to co- produce a plan of support.

The four broad areas of need are:

- Cognition and Learning
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health
- Communication and Interaction
- Sensory and/or physical

Cognition and Learning	Communication and Interaction	Social Emotional and Mental Health	Sensory/and or physical
Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)	Autism Spectrum Sensory Integration	Social and / or emotional dysregulation	Visual impairment (VI)
Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)	Receptive/expressive needs	Attachment disorders	Hearing impairment(HI)

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Cognition and Learning	Communication and Interaction	Social Emotional and Mental Health	Sensory/and or physical
Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty (PMLD)	Social communication needs	Pervasive impact of trauma or Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)	Multi-sensory impairment (MSI)
Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)	Articulation and Phonology	Mental Health needs	Sensory integration
	Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)	Attention deficit hyperactive disorder	Physical disability (PD)

Children and young people may have needs across more than one category, called co-presenting needs. They may also have medical needs that require support and intervention. Considering primary needs is important and a useful first step, but we know a more detailed understanding of an individual CYP is required for action to be beneficial. Teachers should understand the individual characteristics of a CYP's needs, and how these relate to their classroom environment and the content that they are teaching. As highlighted in 2.2 Universal provision: High Quality Teaching, what is key is understanding the specific barriers CYP face to learning and what they need in order to thrive.

Cognition and Learning

Within the code of practice cognition and learning is defined as follows:

Paragraph 6.30

'Support for learning difficulties may be required when children and young people learn at a slower pace than their peers, even with appropriate differentiation. Learning difficulties cover a wide range of needs, including moderate learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD), where children are likely to need support in all areas of the curriculum and associated difficulties with mobility and communication, through to profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), where children are likely to have severe and complex learning difficulties as well as a physical disability or sensory impairment.'

Paragraph 6.31

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Cognition and learning needs may encompass most of the EYFS. However, cognition and learning needs may only impact on specific areas.

Cognition and learning needs in early years:

- Play and imagination skills
- Literacy skills
- Numeracy skills
- Attention and Concentration skills
- Motivation and enthusiasm and lack of engagement which may affect the ability to be able to access activities
- Motivation, enthusiasm for play and learning, interest in the world around them
- Attention and concentration skills
- Difficulties in coping with the structure of the day
- Processing difficulties such as sequencing
- Problem solving
- Generalising of skills
- Accessing a broad and balanced EYFS curriculum due to a limited field of interest

Communication and Interaction

Within the code of practice communication and interaction is defined as follows:

Paragraph 6.29

‘Children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) have difficulty in communicating with others. This may be because they have difficulty saying what they want to, understanding what is being said to them, or they do not understand or use social rules of communication. The profile for every child with SLCN is different and their needs may change over time. They may have difficulty with one, some or all of the different aspects of speech, language or social communication at different times of their lives.’

Communication and interaction needs in Early Years:

- Verbal communication
- Speech sounds and clarity
- Expressive and receptive language skills
- Non-verbal communication
- Social communication skills and interaction
- Attention and listening skills
- Play and imaginative skills
- Attention and listening skills

Social, Emotional and Mental Health

Within the code of practice social, emotional and mental health is defined as:

Paragraph 6.32

‘Children and young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour. These behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Other children and young people may have disorders such as attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder.’

Paragraph 6.33

Children and young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which can present themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, or displaying challenging behaviour. These behaviours may reflect a range of underlying issues such as anxiety or depression. Other children and young people may have Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD).

It is important to recognise that these difficulties may reflect other underlying special educational needs or difficulties from other categories of need. Presenting ‘behaviours’ should always be considered as a symptom of a potential underlying need. Separating the behaviour from the child or young person is crucial by applying a ‘what’s happened (or happening) to them’ rather than ‘what’s wrong with them’ approach.

Social, emotional and mental health needs in early years:

- Social skills with peers and familiar and unfamiliar adults
- Social interactions and social communication skills
- Managing emotions, emotional well-being and emotional resilience
- Empathy
- Confidence and self esteem

Sensory and/or physical needs

Within the code of practice sensory and/or physical is defined as follows:

‘Some children and young people require special educational provision because they have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of the educational facilities generally provided. These difficulties can be age related and may fluctuate over time. Many children and young people with vision impairment (VI),

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hearing impairment (HI) or a multi-sensory impairment (MSI) will require specialist support and/or equipment to access their learning, or habitation support. Children and young people with an MSI have a combination of vision and hearing difficulties. Information on how to provide services for deafblind children and young people is available through the Social Care for Deafblind Children and Adults guidance published by the Department of Health.'

Paragraph 6.34

'Some children and young people with a physical disability (PD) require additional ongoing support and equipment to access all the opportunities available to their peers.'

Paragraph 6.35

Physical and sensory needs cover a wide range of medical conditions in addition to those mentioned above. Some children with physical disabilities may be very cognitively able so the levels of support must be tailored to a person-centred needs analysis of each child's needs and preferences, considering the views of children and their families.

Medical Conditions

There are also medical conditions which affect various areas of development across the four broad areas of need; some have specific definition; genetic (e.g. Prader-Wili) social/environment (e.g. Foetal Alcohol Syndrome).

See Medical needs section in 2.9.

Physical and sensory needs in early years:

- Gross and fine motor skills
- Physical health and well-being
- Self-help and independence, such as feeding, toileting and dressing
- Sensory needs, under or over sensitives
- Vision or hearing impairments