

Improving outcomes in Halton – High aspirations and expectations

The Children and Families Act (2014) introduced a new system for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) on 1st September 2014. There is now a much greater emphasis on working **with** families of children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities to achieve better outcomes.

All children in Halton are entitled to an education that enables them to achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes, and become confident young children with a growing ability to communicate their own views and ready to make the transition into compulsory education.

All early years providers in the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors that receive funding from Halton Borough Council, are required to have regard to the 'Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 – 25 years'.

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.

Principles underlying the Code

The SEND Code of Practice describes the principles that should be observed by all professionals working with children and young people who have SEN or disabilities. These include:

- taking into account the views of children, young people and their families
- enabling children, young people and their parents to participate in decision making
- collaborating with partners in education, health and social care to provide support
- identifying the needs of children and young people
- making high quality provision to meet the needs of children and young people
- focusing on inclusive practices and removing barriers to learning
- helping children and young people to prepare for adulthood

Early years providers in Halton should regularly review and evaluate the quality and breadth of the support they offer or can access for children with SEN or disabilities. Providers should work in partnership with the Local Authority, and other agencies, to explore how different types of need can be met most effectively.

All early years providers have duties under the **Equality Act 2010**. In particular, 'they must not discriminate against, harass or victimise disabled children, and they must make reasonable adjustments, including the provision of auxiliary aids and services for disabled children, to prevent them being put at substantial disadvantage. This duty is anticipatory – it requires thought to be given in advance to what disabled children and young people might require and what adjustments might need to be made to prevent that disadvantage. All publicly funded early years providers must promote equality of opportunity for disabled children. The SEND Code of Practice 0-25 focuses on inclusive practice and removing barriers to learning' (SEND Code of Practice 0-25, page 69).

All early years providers should also take steps to ensure that children with **medical conditions** get the support required to meet those needs. This is set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage framework.

Special Educational Needs – Some Definitions

Halton has adopted the definitions for ‘Special Educational Needs’, ‘Special Educational Provision’ and ‘Disability’ as outlined in the SEND code of Practice: 0-25. These definitions are as follows:-

Special Educational Needs

A child under compulsory school age has special educational needs if he or she is likely to fall into the categories below when they reach compulsory school age, or would do so if special educational provision was not made for them:-

- A child who has significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age; or
- A child who has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age.

Special Educational Provision

For children aged two or more, special educational provision is educational or training provision that is additional to or different from that made generally for other children or young people of the same age by relevant early years providers. For a child under two years of age, special educational provision means educational provision of any kind.

Disability

Many children and young people who have SEN may have a disability under the Equality Act 2010 – that is ‘...a physical or mental impairment which has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities’. This definition provides a relatively low threshold and includes more children than many realise: ‘long-term’ is defined as a ‘year or more’ and ‘substantial’ is defined as ‘more than minor or trivial’. This definition includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing, and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and cancer. Children and young people with such conditions do not necessarily have SEN, but there is significant overlap between disabled children and young people and those with SEN. Where a disabled child or young person requires special educational provision they will also be covered by the SEN definition.

Where a child appears to be behind expected levels, or where a child’s progress gives cause for concern, practitioners should consider all the information about the child’s learning and development from within and beyond the setting, from formal checks, e.g. two-year old progress check, from practitioner observations and from any more detailed assessment of the child’s needs. All the information should be brought together with the observations of parents and considered with them.

A delay in learning and development in the early years may or may not indicate that a child has SEN, that is, that they have a learning difficulty or disability that calls for special educational provision. Equally, difficult or withdrawn behaviour does not necessarily mean that a child has SEN. However, where there are concerns, there should be an assessment to determine whether there are any causal factors. These causal factors could be an underlying learning or communication difficulty, or any family or domestic circumstances which may be contributing to the presenting behaviour.

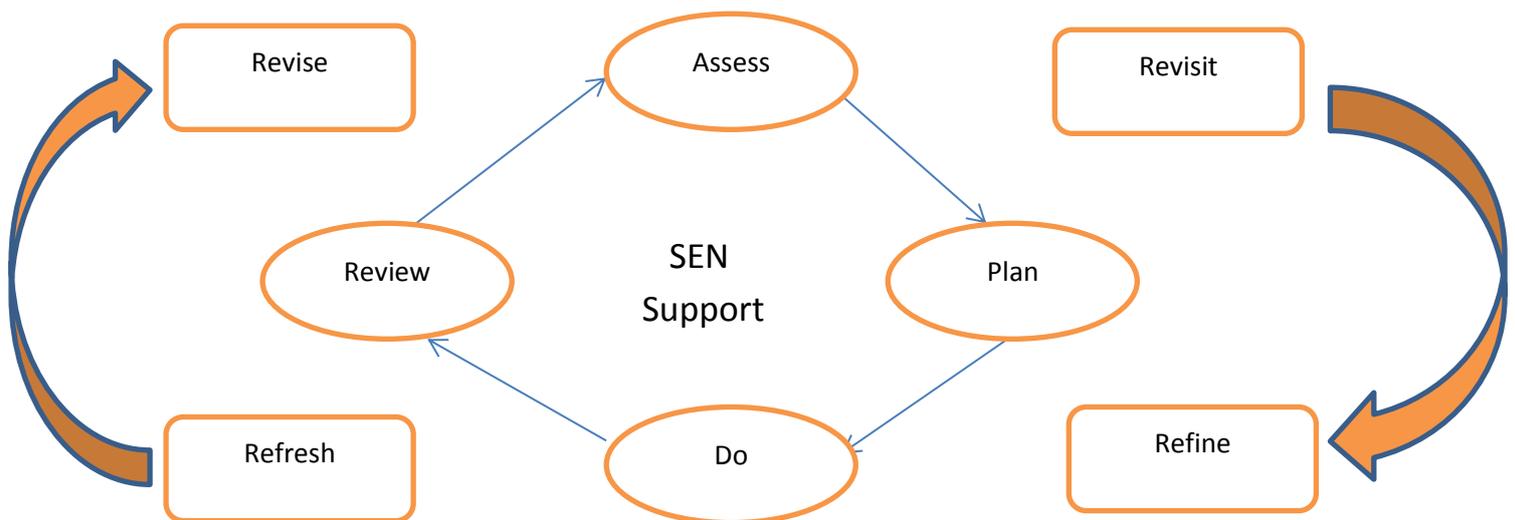
Special Educational Needs (SEN) support in the early years

Where an Early Years setting in Halton identifies a child as having SEN, they must work in partnership with parents to establish what support the child needs. If special provision is made for a child with SEN the parents must be informed.

In accordance with the provisions made under the Children and Families Act 2014, Early Years Action and Early Years Action Plus have now been replaced by '**SEN Support**'.

SEN support is designed to provide a **graduated approach** based on a cycle of action that can be revisited with increasing detail, increasing frequency and with the increased involvement of parents. Throughout the graduated approach, the practitioner, usually the child's key person, remains responsible for working with the child on a daily basis and implements agreed interventions. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) supports individual practitioners, leading and co-ordinating the graduated approach across the setting.

All settings should adopt a graduated approach with four stages of action: **Assess, Plan, Do** and **Review**.



Assess

The early years practitioner, usually the child's key person, works with the SENCO and the child's parents to bring together all the information to analyse the child's needs.

Special educational needs are generally thought of in four broad areas of need and support:

- communication and interaction
- cognition and learning
- social, emotional and mental health
- sensory and/or physical needs

These broad areas of need are not definitive; the Code recognises that individual children often have needs that cut across all of these areas and that children's needs may change over time. **The SEND code of practice is clear that the purpose of identification is to work out what action is needed, not to fit a child into a category.**

Plan

Where the broad approach to SEN Support has been agreed, the early years practitioner, usually the child's key person, and the SENCO should agree, in consultation with the parent:

- the outcomes they are seeking for the child;
- the interventions and support to be put in place;
- the expected impact on progress, development and/or behaviour;
- A date for reviewing the plan.

Plans should:

- take into account the views of the child;
- select the interventions and support to meet the outcomes identified;
- be delivered by practitioners with relevant skills and knowledge;
- identify and address any related staff development needs.

Do

The early years practitioner, usually the child's key person:

- remains responsible for working with the child on a daily basis; and
- implements the agreed interventions or programmes.

The SENCO supports the key person in:

- assessing the child's responses to action taken;
- problem solving;
- advising on effective implementation.

Review

On the agreed date, the early years practitioner, usually the child's key person, and SENCO, working with the child's parents, and taking account of the child's views, should:

- review the effectiveness of the support;
- review the impact of the support on the child's progress;
- evaluate the impact and quality of support.

In the light of child's progress, they agree:

- any changes to the outcomes;
- any changes to the support;
- next steps.

SEN Support: what next?

At each cycle the early years practitioner, usually the child's key person, and SENCO consider, with the parents, and informed by the child's views, whether the child is making expected progress, and whether:

- Special educational provision and SEN support continue to be required;
- To revisit the cycle in more detail or with increased frequency;
- More specialist assessment may be called for;
- Staff require more specialist advice or the child requires more specialist support;
- More specialist expertise is needed to inform reasonable adjustments and access arrangements for a disabled child;
- A request for enhanced provision may need to be considered;
- The child requires an EHC needs assessment.

Halton's Graduated Approach to Identifying and Planning for Children with SEN in the Early Years

Concerns raised by Early Years Practitioner and/or parent/carer

Early Years Practitioner, with the support of the SENCO, needs to decide whether or not a child has SEN

The following strategies may help to inform that decision:-

- Talk to parents – do they have any concerns?
Is anything significant happening in the child's wider life and circumstances?
- Talk to other members of staff – have they noticed anything significant?
- Discuss concerns with Area SENCO
- Back up concerns with evidence e.g.
 - Carry out observations on the area causing concern
 - Think about what is developmentally appropriate considering age/stage – refer to summative assessments/tracking data
- Contact other professionals already involved, with parental consent, e.g. other early years providers, health visitors etc.
- Consult any existing information about the child, e.g. 2 year old checks. Were any concerns raised?

This may result in one of the two following options – A or B

A

Child is not identified as having an area of SEN but concerns remain

Actions may include:-

- Reflect on the environment, practice and routines of the setting – make appropriate changes where necessary.
- Increased differentiation
- Inclusion in targeted groups
- Use recognised strategies, e.g. Hanen, Foundations for Understanding etc.
- Key Person/SENCO continue to carry out focussed observations and assessments
- Regular involvement and review with parents

Concerns resolved:-
No further action

Child makes progress:-
Continue differentiation and monitor progress

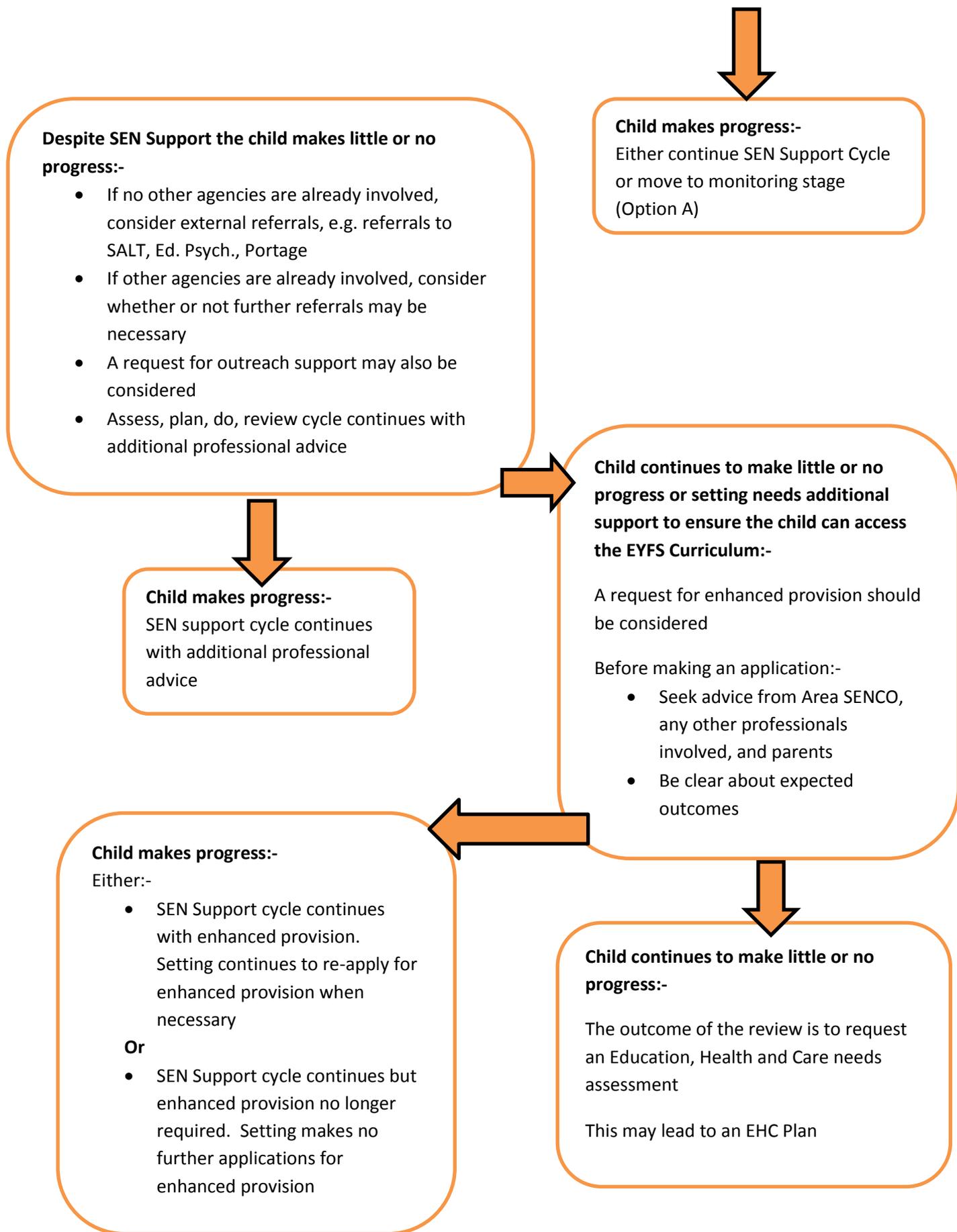
B

Child identified as having an area of SEN

Child moves to SEN Support:-

Commence Assess – Plan – Do – Review cycle

- Individualised SEN Support Plan drawn up for child, in consultation with parents
- SEN support plan regularly reviewed with parents
- Continue to seek advice from Area SENCO
- If child starts setting with other agencies already involved/referrals made, targets on SEN Support Plan should reflect the strategies and advice provided by these professionals
- Identify and implement any training needs
- Carry out risk assessments, if necessary, and if not already completed



The role of the Early Years SENCO in Halton

Maintained nursery schools in Halton **must** ensure that there is a qualified teacher designated as the SENCO in order to ensure the detailed implementation of support for children with SEN. This individual should also have the prescribed qualification for SEN Co-ordination or relevant experience.

In accordance with the EYFS framework, Halton requires other early years providers to have arrangements in place for meeting children's special educational needs. Those in group provision are **expected** to identify a SENCO. Childminders are **encouraged** to identify a person to act as SENCO and childminders who are registered with a childminder agency, or who are part of a network, may wish to share that role between them.

The role of the SENCO involves:

- Ensuring all practitioners in the setting understand their responsibilities to children with SEN and the setting's approach to identifying and meeting SEN;
- Advising and supporting colleagues;
- Ensuring parents are closely involved throughout and that their insights inform action taken by the setting; and
- Liaising with professionals or agencies beyond the setting.

The role of the Area SENCO in Halton

All early years settings have access to guidance and support from Area SENCOs. In Halton, the role of the area SENCO is fulfilled by the Early Years Consultant Teachers.

The role of the Area SENCO includes:

- Providing advice and practical support to early years settings about approaches to identification, assessment and intervention within the SEN Code of Practice;
- Providing day-to-day support for setting-based SENCOs (and childminders) in ensuring arrangements are in place to support children with SEN;
- Developing and disseminating good practice;
- Supporting the development and delivery of training both for individual settings and on a wider basis, including regular SENCO cluster group meetings and training for new SENCOs;
- Working with existing SENCOs to support smooth transitions;
- Providing a link between education, health and social care to facilitate appropriate early years provision for children with SEN;
- Signposting SENCOs to local impartial information, advice and support services, to promote effective work with parents of children in the early years;
- Strengthening the links between settings, parents, schools, social care and health services;

The Area SENCO plays an important part in planning for children with SEN to transfer between early years provision and schools.

The Local Offer

The local offer sets out in one place information about provision the local authority expects to be available across education, health and social care for local disabled children and children with SEN, including those that do not have an Education, Health and Care Plan. Local authorities must publish a local offer and keep it under review.

The local offer has two key purposes:

- To provide clear, comprehensive, accessible and up-to-date information about the available provision and how to access it; and
- To make provision more responsive to local needs and aspirations by directly involving disabled children and those with SEN, their parents/carers and service providers in its development and review.

The Local Offer for Halton is a valuable resource for both SENCOs and practitioners. It is a way of signposting parents to available support and may be found at www.halton.gov.uk/localoffer.

Advice for parents and carers

Where a child is identified as having SEN, parents and children are entitled to impartial information, advice and support from a local service. In Halton independent support will be provided by 'Halton SEND Partnership' and 'Edge Inclusion'. For contact details, please see below:-

Halton SEND Partnership

Tel: 0151 511 7733

Email: SENDpartnership@halton.gov.uk

Edge Inclusion

Tel: 07947 100727

Email: is@edgeinc.co.uk

Parents/carers should also be directed to their local offer and settings should be able to support parents in finding the information they may need.

Furthermore, the Department for Education (DfE) have published a document: 'Special educational needs and disability: a guide for parents and carers' (August 2014) which lays out what parents/carers can expect from Early Years providers for their children.

Transition to Primary School

SEN support should include planning and preparing for transition, before a child moves into another setting or school. This can also include a review of the SEN support being provided or the EHC plan. To

support the transition, information should be shared by the current setting with the receiving setting or school. The current setting should agree with the parents the information to be shared as part of this planning process.

In Halton, children who may need additional support when they transition into school are considered in two panels:

1. Early Years Notification Panel.

Early Years Practitioners should submit an application for the Early Years Notification Panel if , after discussion with parents and professionals, the child will need to access a Resource Base. This panel is held in March BEFORE the child's home school has been released.

Resource Bases

There are a number of Resource Bases in Halton primary schools which can provide specialist provision for children with additional or complex needs.

When a child is starting at Reception class, the Local Authority could consider placing them into one of these resource bases to meet the child's needs, by making sure that they receive the best possible support from staff who are experienced in working with children with complex needs.

A resource base has a much smaller number of children and a higher number of staff than in a mainstream classroom.

Parents are always welcome to visit the resource base when making a decision about appropriate support for their children.

The resource bases which could be considered for children starting in Reception are:

- **The Grange Resource base (Runcorn) for children with a diagnosis of ASD**
- **Simms Cross Resource Base (Widnes) for children with a diagnosis of ASD**

Both of these bases can have a maximum of 7 children with 1 teacher and 2 teaching assistants. The children attend the base fulltime. Initially, they may spend all of their time in the resource base but once they are settled, they will start to spend some part of each day in mainstream class with support. The teachers and staff in the resource base are all well qualified and experienced working with children with social communication difficulties, and so are the mainstream teachers and staff.

Children could keep their resource base place for a number of years, but will spend increasing amounts of time in mainstream class with their peers, to support their learning and development, both academically and personally. This also maintains their friendship groups within their local community.

Children will return to the resource base if they require any specific intervention eg speech and language or social skills. They can also return if they become anxious in the mainstream class. The same support strategies are used in the base and in the mainstream classroom.

The resource base places are reviewed every year.

- **Oakfield Assessment Base (Widnes) for children with speech and language difficulties**
- **The Brow Assessment Base (Runcorn) for children with speech and language difficulties**

Both of these bases have a maximum of 7 children with one teacher and at least one teaching assistant. The children attend the base part time for 2 days each week, and spend 3 days a week in a mainstream school chosen by the parents. When they are in the assessment base, the children will spend time developing their speech and language skills, and social communication skills in small groups with experienced staff. When they are in their mainstream schools they will develop their social interaction skills, play and language, where they can learn from positive language role models in the classroom. Staff in the assessment base and in the mainstream school will share ideas for the best ways to support each child in their mainstream class.

All children will have further assessment with the speech and language service and with the educational psychologists. In the spring term, a review will be held to discuss their progress and a decision will be made about what should happen next, for example, will the child return full time to their mainstream school, or do they need further specialist support.

2. Early Years Transition Panel.

This Panel discusses children who may need additional support when transitioning to school. It takes place in June AFTER the child's primary school has been released and the transition meeting with school has been held.

The panel will make a decision on whether funding to support the child on their transition to primary school is appropriate and the amount of support is decided.