

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.