BARNET EYSEND

THE ROLE OF THE SENCO

In Early Years Settings



Barnet Early Years SEND Advisory Team is committed to supporting early year's settings to move to more inclusive environments for children with a variety of special educational needs and disabilities. Please contact your SEND Advisor for further information. This Document has been produced by Barnet Early Years SEND Advisory Team

Revised February 2023. Barnet Early Years SEND Advisory Team can be contacted on 020 8361 2456 (Ext 1)

The Role of the Early Years SENCO

All early years settings are required to appoint a SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator). The SENCO's fundamental role is to oversee the day to day running of the setting's Special Educational Needs/Inclusion Policy.

More specifically, the early years setting SENCO has responsibility for:

- **Supporting colleagues**
  in identifying and meeting the special educational needs/disabilities of children within the setting
- **Information**
  Ensuring that relevant background information about individual children with special educational needs/disabilities is collected, recorded and updated
- **Overseeing records**
  Overseeing that records are kept and the Assess, Plan Do Review process is carried out for children with Special Educational Needs within the setting (e.g. ensuring that, where applicable, SEN Support Plans are in place).



- **Acting as the first point of contact**
  For outside professionals regarding children with special educational needs/disabilities within the setting
- **Seeking outside advice**
  And support as appropriate for individual children with special educational needs/disabilities
- **Liaison**
  Ensuring that liaison and consultation with parents of children with special educational needs/disabilities takes place

(For further information see 'A Guide to Working in Partnership with Parents of Children with Special Educational Needs in Early Years Settings' available from your area SENCO)

Being a SENCO in an early years setting can be demanding and also both rewarding and fulfilling.

The Barnet Early Years SEND Advisory Team is available to support Inclusion in early year's settings. The SEND Advisor in the Early

Years SEND Advisory Team promote inclusive learning environments within each of Barnet's private, voluntary and independent early years settings. The team provide support to early years setting SENCOs in order to help her/him to carry out the SENCO role and duties.

For further information please contact your SEND Advisor

Sample Pre-school SENCO Job Description

Job Description for:
Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator in [Insert Setting Name] Early Years Setting

Context and purpose of the Job

The Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the setting's Special Educational Needs or Inclusion Policy to ensure that children with Special Educational Needs are fully included into the early years setting.

Accountable to:

Setting Manager

The SENCO has responsibility for:

- ensuring liaison with parents and other professionals in respect of children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND)
- advising and supporting other practitioners in the setting
- ensuring that SEN Support Plans are in place
- ensuring that relevant background information about individual children with special educational needs is collected, recorded and updated
- making applications to the Complex Needs Panel for High needs Funding for individual children with more complex special educational needs

Main Duties:

- To keep a profile of children with special educational needs.
- To observe and support children as appropriate on the special educational needs profile.
- To support and advise Key Workers, Learning Support Assistants etc. as appropriate, in how to include children's needs in the setting.
- To liaise with settings and schools (reception) including assessment centres (Acorn), Children and Family Centres etc.
- To liaise with other professionals from outside services and external agencies e.g. Area SENCOs, Pre-school Education Team Teachers /
  Educational Psychologists, Occupational Therapists,

Physiotherapists, Speech and Language Therapists, etc.

- To arrange, organise and review support for individual children.
- To keep Key Workers and Learning Support Assistants up to date with SEN. and inclusion issues and to encourage personal development through courses and INSET.
- To meet with parents regularly in order to maintain good relationships and to keep parents informed about their child's progress.
- To take the lead in managing provision for children on the SEN profile at SEN Support and for children with EHCP's.
- To respond to changes in legislation/practice from government and the Local Authority.
- To organise INSET relevant for staff in the early years setting.
- To review individual children's SEN support Plans termly as appropriate.
- To write detailed education reports about individual children for other professionals and parents
- To review EHCP's via annual and interim review meetings.
- To meet at least termly with the Area SENCO.
- To develop and share knowledge of support strategies and resources (equipment, books etc)

Person Specification

for a SENCO working in an early years setting

Job Title: Early Years Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)

Reports to: Early Years Setting Manager

Experience relevant to post

Essential/ Desirable	Criteria
E	Experience of working in an early years environment
E	Experience of planning, organising and differentiating the curriculum
E	Experience of working with children with special/additional educational needs

Competencies and special aptitudes

Essential/ Desirable	Criteria
E	A commitment to the inclusion of children with special / additional needs and a willingness to undertake training
E	Good interpersonal skills
E	A willingness to act on advice of outside agencies
E	Ability to work supportively and effectively with colleagues
E	Ability to organise time and meet deadlines
E	Demonstrate good practical administrative and organisational skills
E	Good literacy skills with the ability to present written information to a variety of different agencies in a clear and coherent way.
D	Good ICT skills

Knowledge relevant to the job

Essential/ Desirable	Criteria
E	A good knowledge and understanding of child developmental stages

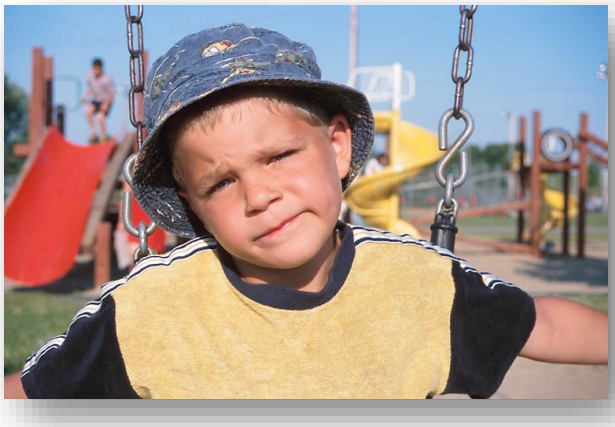
E	Knowledge and understanding of relevant curriculum guidance (e.g. Early Years Foundation Stage etc.)

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice 2014

Most children in your early years setting will be able to access all areas of the curriculum and the activities that are on offer in your pre-school.

However, there are a few children who may find this more difficult. If you feel that, despite putting in place your usual differentiated curriculum, a child is not making progress, you might consider making plans and provision which are additional to or different from those that you make for most other children.

The following SEN Graduated Approach will help you identify the routes to take in order to meet the varying needs of children with SEND in your setting.



A GRADUATED APPROACH to Identifying & Planning for Needs in the Early Years

When concerns are raised by Parent or Staff – Key staff need to:

- Consider what is happening in the child's wider life and circumstances by talking to parents
- Reflect on your environment, practice and routines
- Carry out observations on the area causing concern
- Think about what is developmentally appropriate considering age/stage
- Talk with other members of staff and the setting SENCO
- Have a planned meeting with Parents

This may result in one of three options A, B or C

A

A: No action
Concerns Resolved.

B

B: Action is taken. This may include:

- Increased **differentiation**
- Focussed observation and assessment
- Regular involvement and review with Parents
- Advice from SEND Advisor with parental permission and Consultation Request Form
- Add to SEN Profile **(Monitor)**

Child makes progress.
Continue differentiation and Monitor progress.

C

C: Child moves to SEN support and is placed on the SEN profile. The child has an Individualised **SEN Support Plan**. Parents and SEND Advisor involved

Assess – Plan – Do - Review

Child makes little or no progress despite **SEN Support.**
Consider external referrals through the Barnet Child Development Team **OR** a child starts at setting with referrals already made **OR** professionals already involved. Assess, plan, do, review cycle continues with additional professional advice.
Possible application for additional resources

Child makes progress
Either continue SEN Support Cycle OR move to Monitor progress

Child makes progress
Assess, plan, do, review cycle continues with additional professional advice/resources

Child makes little or no progress.
The outcome of the review is to request an Education Health and Care Needs Assessment. This may lead to an **EHC Plan** and additional resources

Further Information to Support the Graduated Approach

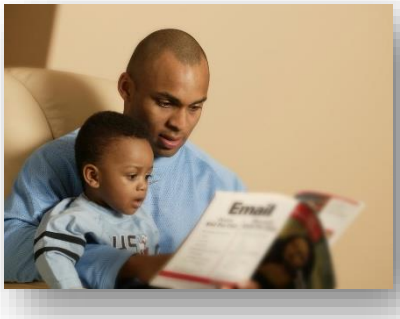
CHECKLIST OF ACTION

Try to do the following:

- Find out if other members of staff share your concerns and inform the manager of the setting
- Observe the child indoors and outside
- Record your observations (e.g. using the 'Focussed Observation Sheet', ABC chart, or other methods appropriate to the child's needs)
- **Ensure that appropriate differentiation/adaptation is in place:**

  Strategies used to enable the child to progress should be recorded within the setting's ordinary planning.

  - This should include the teaching strategies and the resources to be put in place
  - Reflect advice from existing outside professionals
- Speak to the child's parents/carers about your concerns. It is very important to maintain a positive relationship with parents/carers in order to form an alliance based on trust. This will go some way to aid the discussion of 'difficult' topics such as your concerns about their child.
- Find out from the parents/carers if other professionals are involved (e.g. Health Visitor, Speech and Language Therapist, Paediatrician, Physiotherapist etc.) With parental permission, contact the other professionals and see if they share your concerns and if the child has had a recent two- year development check, medical or hearing test, if appropriate.



- With parental permission, inform the Barnet Early Years SEND Advisory Team/SEND Advisors using the 'Consultation Request Form'.

Generally speaking, your SEND Advisor should be the first port of call for 'outside' help. They will then liaise with, or

help you to liaise with other professionals to ensure that the child's needs are fully identified and met. Your SEND Advisor can help you to make a referral to other services via the Barnet Child Development Team.

What Next?

- **Liaise with parents/carers:**
  Parents/carers must be kept fully informed about their child's needs, and are the prime source of information. It is important to involve parents/carers in:
  Gathering information
  Planning interventions and devising SEN Support Plans
  Reviewing progress
  Make parents aware of the local parent 'Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS). The telephone number is 020 8359 7637.

- **Liaise with other professionals:**
  Multi-agency input is often very significant for young children. Outside professionals such as health or social services (Health Visitor, Speech and Language Therapists, Physiotherapists, etc) may already be involved and it is very important that the SENCO – with parental permission – liaises with all those professionals already involved with the child.

- **Advise and support other practitioners:**
  The SENCO may not be the person who has most contact with the child. Whoever takes the role of SENCO will need to work closely with the key adults working with the child.

- **Ensure that relevant background information is collected;**
  From parents and all professionals involved with the child.

  - **…recorded:**
    In addition to the information that all settings will record for all children, the pupil record or profile for a child with SEND should include:
    - Information about the child's progress and behaviour from the early education setting itself
    - Information from parents
    - Information from any other involved professionals (speech therapists etc.)

    It may also include the child's views including what is

important to them, any difficulties and how these might be addressed.

- **…and updated:**
  SEN Support Plans should be reviewed regularly, ideally three times a year or more frequently. Reviews need not be unduly formal, but parents' views on the child should be sought, and they should be consulted as part of the review process

If the child is still not making progress…

In some cases it may be necessary to make referrals to external support services such as: The Barnet Early Years SEND Advisory Team, the Specialist Team or an Educational Psychologist.



- **These outside professionals can:**
  Help with advice on new SEN Support Plan targets and strategies
  Provide more specialist assessments
  Give advice on the use of new or specialist strategies or materials

A request for help from external services is likely to follow a decision taken by the SENCO and colleagues in consultation with parents at a meeting to review the child's SEN Support Plan.

- **The review should consider:**
  Has progress been made?
  What are the parents' views?
  Is there a need for more information or advice about the child?

A referral to external services will need to be made on a multi-agency referral form. Please include as much information as possible on the referral form e.g.:

What are you concerned about?
Which strategies have already been employed?
Which targets have been set and achieved?

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Referral for Education, Health and Care Plan Needs Assessment.

For a very few children the help given by the early education provider through the SEN Support Plan will not be sufficiently effective to enable the child to progress satisfactorily. It will then be necessary for the provider, in consultation with the parents and any external agencies already involved, to consider whether a request for an Education, Health and Care Plan Needs Assessment be made.

Parents and early year's settings, can make a request to the Local Authority (LA) that the child resides in for such an assessment. The LA will then decide whether an assessment for an Education, Health and Care Plan Needs Assessment is required.

When a request for an assessment is made, the LA will require:

- Evidence of the Assess-Plan-Do-Review process and that any strategy or programme implemented for the child has been continued for a reasonable period of time with only very limited success
- Clear documentation in relation to the child's special educational needs and any action taken to deal with those needs

In considering EHCP Needs Assessment, where the child is attending an early years setting, the LA will look for the following information in order to make a decision:

1. What difficulties have been identified by the setting? Has the staff provided individualised strategies through the SEN Support Plan?
2. Has outside advice been sought, regarding the child's:
    - Physical health and function
    - Communication skills
    - Perceptual and motor skills
    - Self-help skills
    - Social skills
    - Emotional and behavioural development
    - Responses to learning experiences
3. Have parental views been considered?

For further information about how to request an assessment for an Education, Health and Care Plan Needs Assessment, please attend training provided by the Barnet Early Years SEND Advisory Team and speak to your SEND Advisor.

Your SEND Advisor from the Barnet Early Years SEND Advisory Team can give you advice and support in your role as early years setting SENCO.

Further information and guidance documents are also available to help you. Please ask your SEND Advisor for further information.

Early Indications of Possible Special Educational Needs

Depending on the age of the child, they may have special educational needs/disabilities if they regularly display one or more of the behaviours below, after having had a reasonable period of time to settle-in to the group:

- **The child:**
  - has no desire to join in with social play
  - has limited or no imaginative play (home corner etc.)
  - has no or limited verbal communication
  - uses jargon (made up words)
  - does not follow and/or does not seem to understand basic instructions given directly to her/him or the group



  - does not communicate basic needs (e.g. need to go to the toilet, have a drink etc.)
  - takes part in prolonged repetitive actions, and disruption of this leads to the child becoming very distressed (e.g. rocking or spinning an object, always needing to perform actions in the same order etc.)
  - still does not understand how to play on large equipment despite having been shown a number of times
  - finds it difficult to climb or descend stairs without unusual amounts of adult help
  - often falls over or bumps into things
  - finds it difficult to sit down in a space without sitting on something or someone
  - has an unusual fear of open/closed spaces
  - has a very limited attention span
  - becomes distressed easily or for no apparent reason
  - has a lot of difficulties separating from a parent/carer
  - refuses to move from one activity to another
  - moves between activities very rapidly without settling
  - displays excessive attention-seeking or socially inappropriate behaviour
  - displays an unusual reaction to sounds e.g. no reaction, over reaction

- displays a resistance to change in routine
- finds a difficulty with, or a resistance to, following adult-led activities
- shows difficulties with activities involving fine motor skills (e.g. drawing, cutting, sticking, inset and basic interlocking puzzles etc.)
- shows a dislike of tactile and/or messy play activities e.g. sand, play dough, painting, cornflour etc.)

This list is obviously not exhaustive. Please ensure you consult the Barnet Early Years Identification Toolkit, other developmental checklists and discuss further with your SEND Advisor for more information. Training for staff is available in this area.