

SEND

STOKE-ON-TRENT

**SENDCO Professional
Network Meeting**

**Summer Term
11th June 2026**

Agenda

- Arrival and welcome
- Annual Inclusion Strategy
- Inclusive Mainstream Fund (collaboration)
- Experts at Hand (engagement)
- Coffee with SENCO Champions
- Focused Feedback – feedback ideas around using the IMF
- Regional and National Updates
- Health Focus – Neurodiversity Assessment Team



Spotlight – SEND Reforms

SEND Reforms – 5 Key Principles

'Inclusion is all staff supporting the learning, wellbeing and safety needs of all children, so that they belong, achieve, and thrive'. [Link](#)

Early

Children should receive the support they need as soon as possible.

Local

Children and young people with SEND should be able to learn at a school or college close to their home, alongside their peers

Fair

Every school / education setting should be resourced and able to meet common and predictable needs

Effective

Reforms should be grounded in evidence

Shared

Education, health and care should work in partnership with local government, families, teachers, experts and representative bodies

Areas of Development



5 'areas of development' replace the 4 existing areas of need.

Layers of support

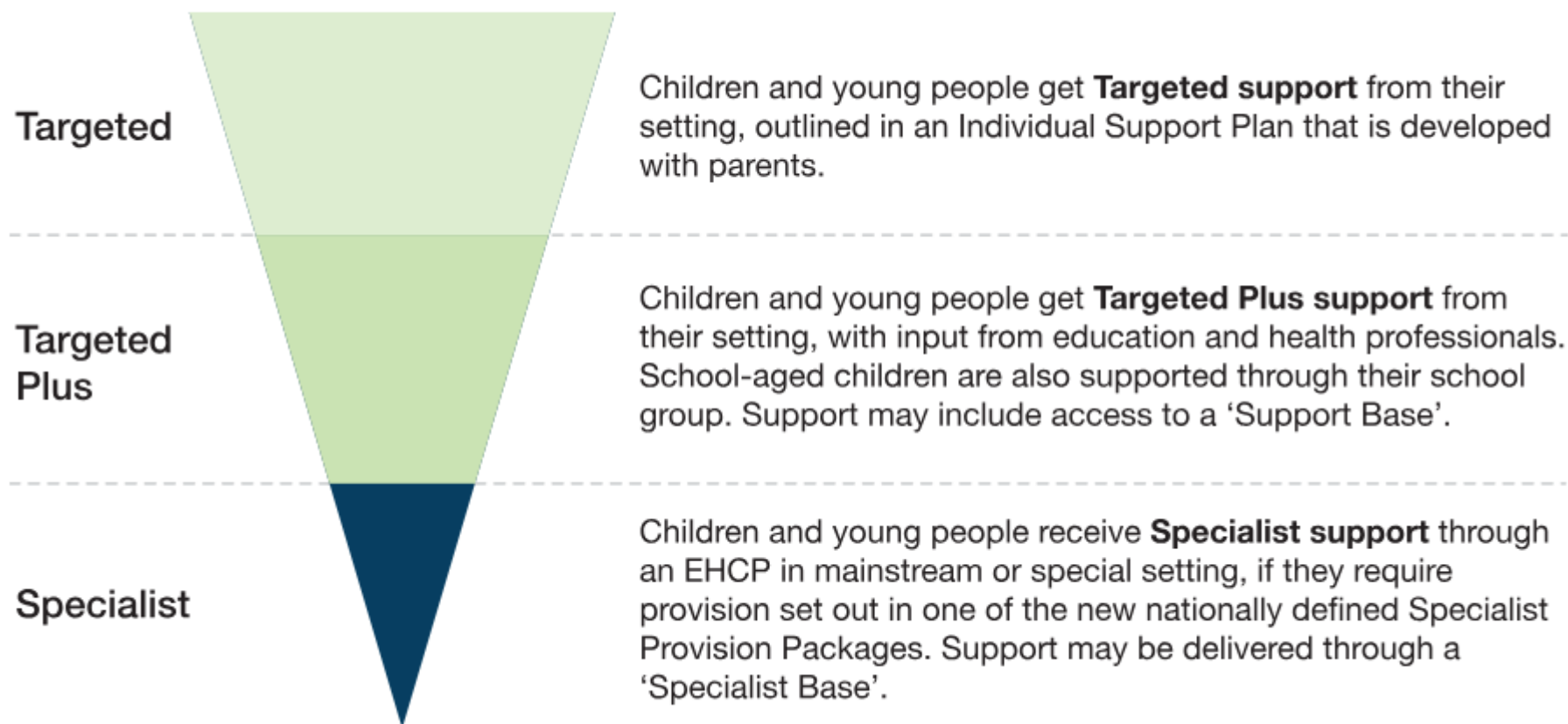
Universal Offer

- ambitious leadership and governance that embed inclusive planning;
- evidence-based support prioritising early intervention;
- high-quality teaching with a curriculum designed for all learners;
- accessible and enriching provision beyond the classroom;
- a safe and respectful culture fostering belonging and attendance;
- strong partnerships with families and wider services;
- inclusive learning environments with continuous improvements to accessibility.



Layers of support

4 layers of support - [link](#)



Individual Support Plans

- Statutory duty to record and monitor needs and provision in an ISP
- National standardised digital format
- Help with transfer of key information at transition points
- Co-produced with Parents/Carers
- Part of Ofsted inspection focus
- Includes children with and without an EHCP
- Updated at least annually/as needs change

Inclusion Bases

“Inclusion Bases offering greater levels of specialist expertise will become a core part of the local education offer, delivering high-quality teaching and support to children with more complex needs who would benefit from provision that bridges the current gap between mainstream and specialist.”

Support bases

- Funded by the school/trust’s own resources
- Targeted +
- Adapted curriculum pathways

Specialist bases

- LA funded places
- EHCP and possible specialist support package
- Specialist support within a mainstream school

EHCPs

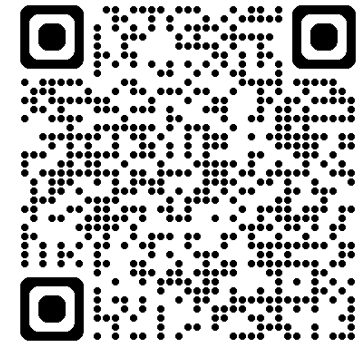
- No changes in the delivery of current EHCPs until 2030
- For children with the most complex needs
- National digital format
- Setting will have a legal duty to deliver the educational offer in an EHCP
- Day-to-day provision will be detailed in an ISP (reviewed by setting, at least termly)
- EHCP is reviewed at the end of key stages by LAs and reassessed at transition points
- Fast track for a Specialist Provision Package and EHCP for children under the age of 5 whose needs are complex and identified at an early stage
- [Link](#)

Inclusive Mainstream Fund

Helping schools to become **inclusive by design**.

“The aim through this funding to improve outcomes across children’s attainment and wellbeing, whilst increasing parental trust and confidence in the education system.”

- Funding will be paid...
- To maintained mainstream schools via local authorities
- directly to mainstream academy trusts by early July
- [Inclusive mainstream fund: 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK](#)
- [Inclusive mainstream fund: best practice for schools - GOV.UK](#)
- [Link](#)



Inclusive Mainstream Fund

**Ambitious
leadership
and
governance**

**Evidence-
based early
support**

**High-quality
teaching &
curriculum
designed for
all learners**

**Accessible
and enriching
provision
beyond the
classroom**

**A safe and
respectful
culture
fostering
belonging and
attendance**

**Strong
partnerships
with families
and wider
services**

**Inclusive
environments**

Inclusive Early Years Fund

Schools and settings who have children in the early years who are eligible for funded hours will also receive an IEYF payment.

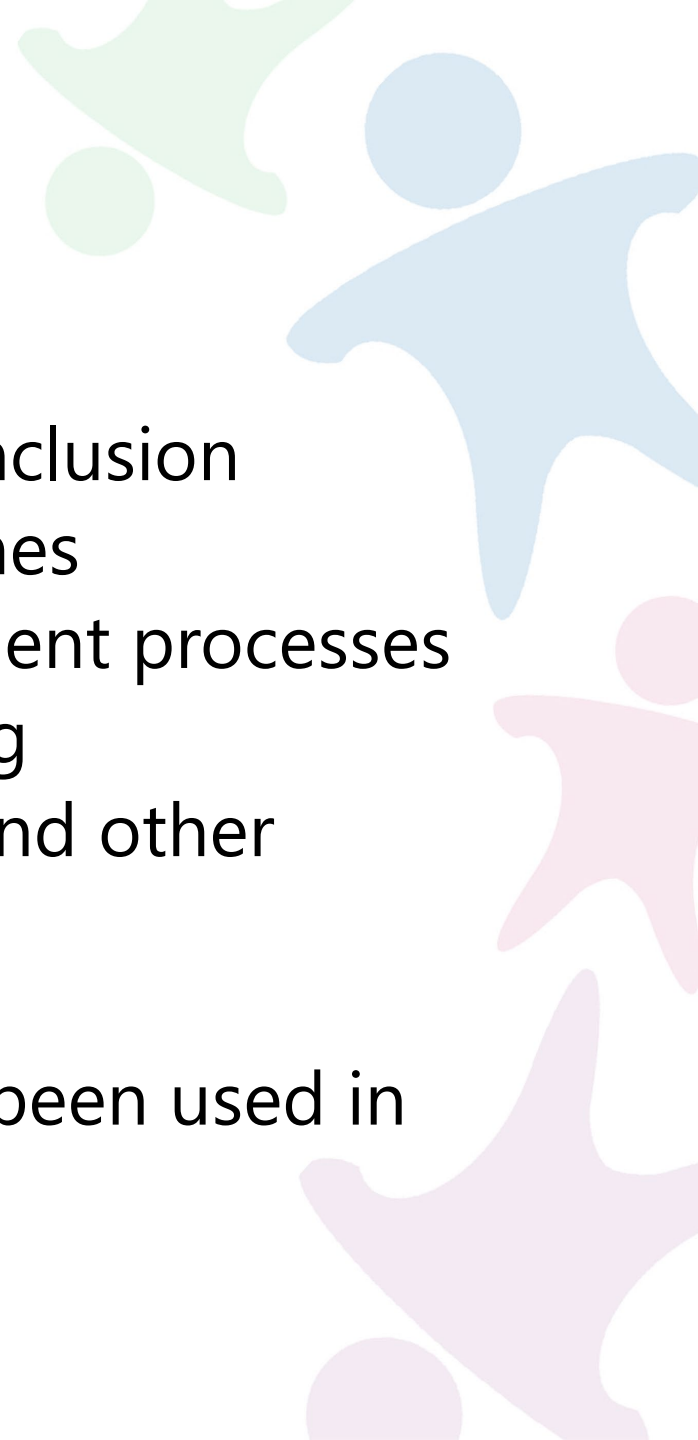
- This comes into the LA and then 100% gets distributed to settings and schools.
- The DfE has set a minimum amount of £1000 meaning that not all schools or settings will receive a payment.
- Funding is calculated using a formula based on the number of PTEs.
- Funding will be paid as a lump sum by the end of September.

Inclusive Early Years Fund

IEYF can be used for:

- Staff training and development in SEND and inclusion
- Improving environments, resources, and routines
- Strengthening early identification and assessment processes
- Developing inclusive practice across the setting
- Enhancing partnership working with families and other services

The LA will be asked to report on how IEYF has been used in the city and its impact.



Annual Inclusion Strategy

“An inclusion strategy is a plan to use their overall school funding allocation to identify and meet the needs of their cohort and make meaningful steps to embed inclusive practice.”

- Schools must publish their inclusion strategy statement by **31st December 2026**
- DfE will publish clear guidance, expectations and a template
- Must account for core funding allocations, including their **notional SEN budget** and the **inclusive mainstream fund** for schools.

[Information on SEND Reform for those leading and working in mainstream schools](#)

[Link](#)

Annual Inclusion Strategy

An **effective inclusion strategy** will:

- present the school's strategy for ensuring high quality ordinarily available provision which meets children's needs and fulfils the conditions of grant
- be published as a statement on the school website each academic year, readily available and accessible to parents
- be available to Ofsted inspectors to consider when evaluating inclusion
- be refined through scrutiny by governors and trustees

Annual Inclusion Strategy

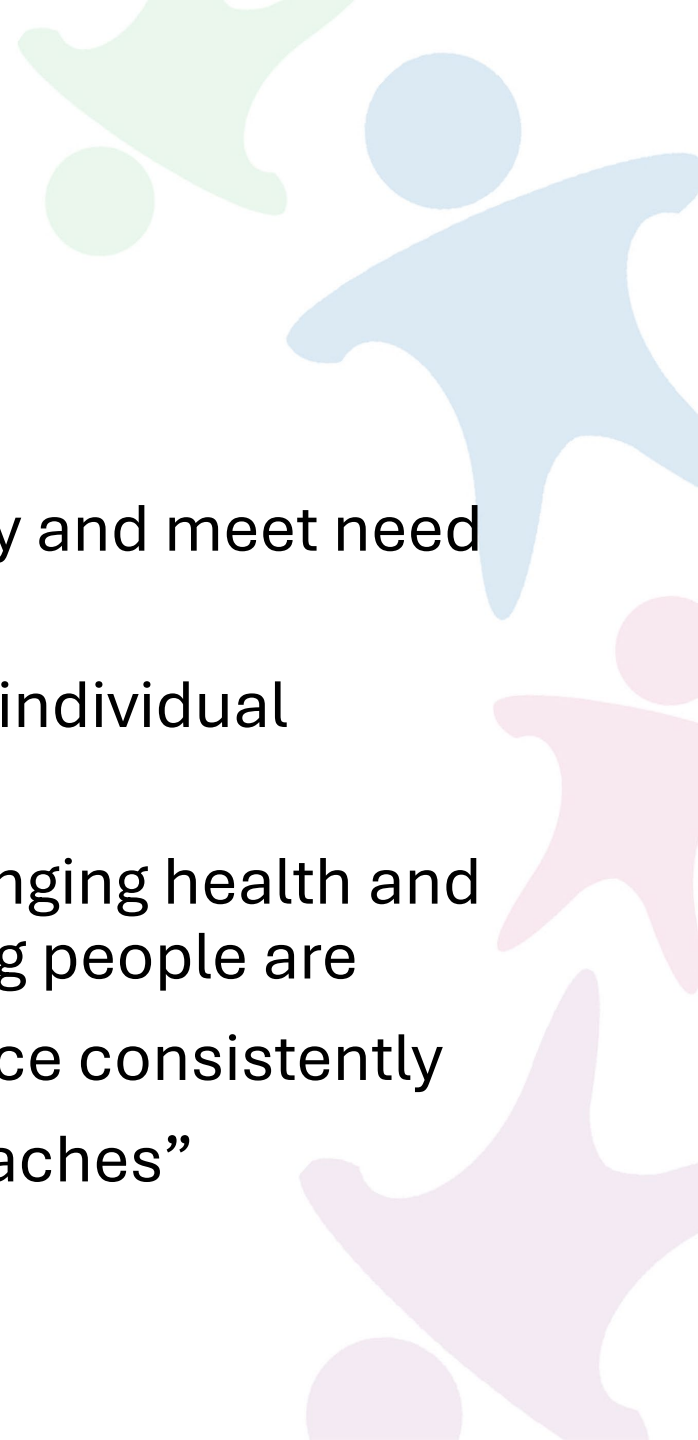
The inclusion strategy should report on:

- the commonly occurring, predictable needs within a school's cohort and the barriers to learning pupils with additional needs face
- how funding is already spent on inclusion and their planned strategy for further investment, based on evidence and best practice and in line with the 7 areas of inclusion
- the activities and approaches undertaken to support this strategy and meet the needs of their cohort

Experts at Hand - Overview

“The Experts at Hand offer is designed to:

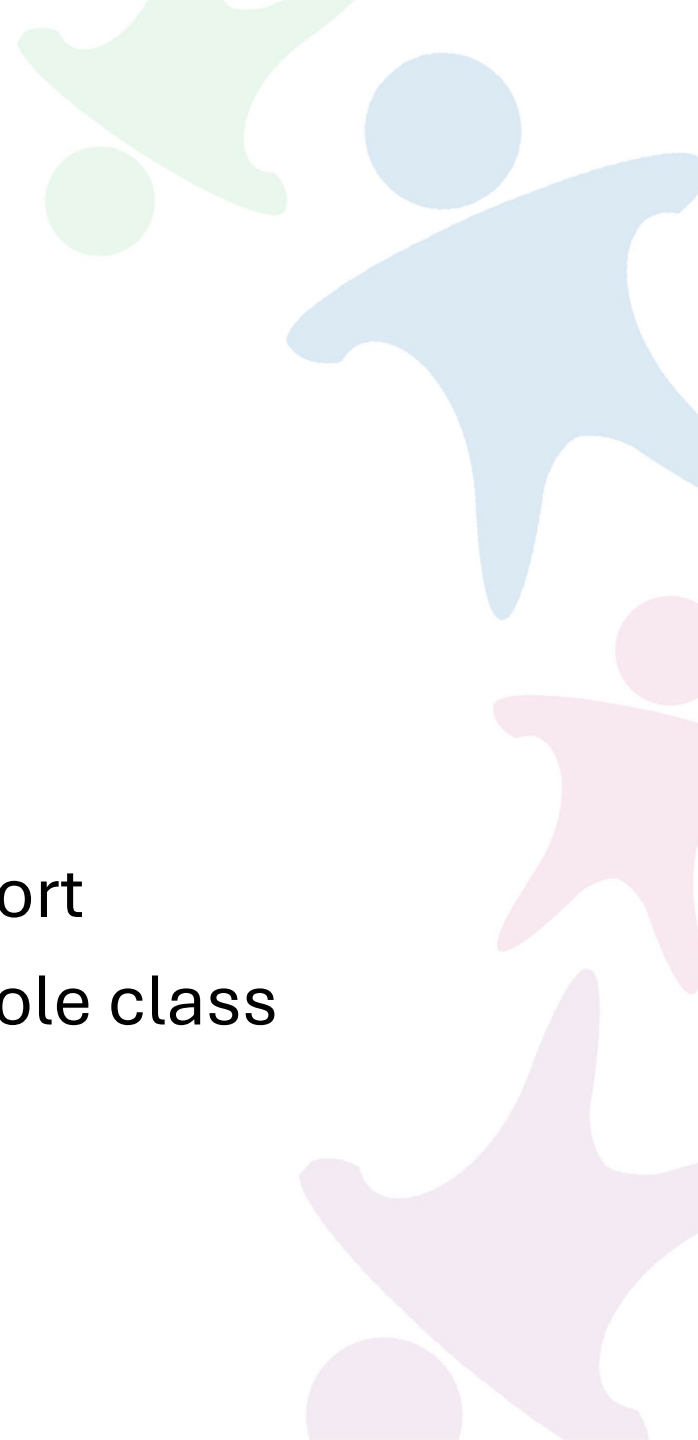
- strengthen the ability of mainstream settings to identify and meet need earlier
- support children, without the need to rely on intensive individual referrals
- be delivered in and alongside mainstream settings, bringing health and education expertise closer to where children and young people are
- support settings to deliver high-quality inclusive practice consistently
- focus primarily on group, class or whole-setting approaches”



Experts at Hand

The type of support provided includes:

- observing children
- training and coaching staff
- providing access to advice
- working with parents to co-produce inclusive support
- providing support in small groups or across the whole class



Experts at Hand – Stoke Model

Experts at Hand: A New Model for SEND Inclusion in Stoke-on-Trent

Preventative, non-referral initiative to embed education and health expertise directly into mainstream settings, utilizing Community SENCOs as navigators for rapid access to specialists to support inclusion before needs escalate.



National Timeline

Phase 1 – Aligning to Best Practice Academic Years 2025/26 to 2026/27

During this phase:

- updated guidance for schools will be published;
- expanded optional and targeted support programmes will aid schools in aligning with best practice;
- pupil premium funding will increase which, along with SEND capital investment, will support inclusion;
- schools will become familiar with new expectations and standards.

Examples of support available include:

- new guidance, e.g. 'Families as Partners' and 'Behaviour in Schools';
- attendance and behaviour hubs;
- universal and targeted Regional Improvement for Standards of Excellence (RISE) support;
- a newly-launched KS3 alliance;
- increased pupil premium and SEND capital investment.

Phase 2 – Preparation for Major Reforms Academic Years 2026/27 and 2027/28

During this phase:

- schools will prepare for SEND reforms and national curriculum changes;
- significant investment and training will be delivered;
- National Inclusion Standards will be introduced;
- 'SEND Workforce CPD' training will be launched.

Key developments include:

- £1.6bn Inclusive Mainstream Fund investment to be introduced (over 3 years);
- establishment of 'Experts at Hand' specialist services.

Phase 3 – Full Implementation From Academic Year 2028/29 onwards

During this phase:

- SEND reforms and curriculum changes will be fully implemented;
- schools are expected to be aligned with best practice;
- the new national curriculum will be in place (Autumn 2028);
- new systems of support should be established.

Reform Introduction

- Changes will be carefully sequenced and phased.
- Some reforms will be tested or piloted before full roll-out.
- Implementation depends on legislation and consultation outcomes.
- Support will be provided to schools throughout the process.

Next Steps for Stoke-on-Trent

Experts at Hand

- Recruitment of Community SENCOs
- Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy EAH deployment
- Launch Communities of Practice
- Launch online collaboration space
- Special school outreach offer launched

Sufficiency & Place Planning

- Increase primary inclusion bases
- Increase secondary inclusion bases
- Review and plan Early years, AP and post-16 capacity

Partnerships & Practice

- 4 SEND Communities launched
- Launch of Local Inclusion Standards (OAP)
- Whole Education self-assessment rolled out

Regional Updates

Ordinarily Available Provision

Ordinarily Available Provision is the everyday support and adaptive teaching that all mainstream settings are expected to provide from their own resources for children and young people, including those with SEND, before specialist help is considered.

- Change of name in Stoke – Local Inclusion Standards

So far:

- Engagement with SENDCOs, Parents, LA, Health
- Draft format
- Co-production sessions

NEXT STEPS

- Draft documents will be sent to schools for feedback

Ordinarily Available Provision

Ordinarily Available Provision Guidance – Communication & Interaction



Communication & Interaction – Quality First Teaching & General Supportive Approaches

Environmental supports	Adult-led supports	Peer-to-peer Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication-friendly environment • Word walls • Task-boards to support completion of task in correct order • Visual timetables and now & next boards • Visual communication supports eg core boards, communication books • Use of Talking Mats for collecting Pupil Voice • Symbols to reinforce words in labels and displays • Individual low-arousal workstations • Total communication environments – signs, gestures, symbols and AAC (alternative and augmentative communication) • Key vocabulary displays/supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chunking of tasks and information (eg 1-2 key words) • Time to process verbal instructions and questions – “thinking time” • Breaking instructions down, step-by-step in the order to be carried out. • Modelling meaning, correct speech, pronunciation and language e.g. Pupil says, “2 mouses” and Adult replies, “Yes 2 mice.” • Extend speech by one step/addition e.g. Pupil says, “It’s a car”, adult replies, “Yes it’s a red car”. • Minimal copying from the whiteboard • Differentiation of language depend on levels of understanding (eg use of synonyms). • Explicit pre-teaching of new vocabulary and opportunities to apply this. • Activities that are multisensory and more visual e.g. mind mapping. • Regular check-ins to ensure understanding throughout a lesson. • Starting instructions with the young person’s name • Repeating instructions frequently • Social Stories • Comic Strip Conversations • Use of voice notes to repeat instructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible groupings • Talking buddies • Positive peer role models for speech and language

Ordinarily Available Provision

Ordinarily Available Provision Guidance – Communication & Interaction – Speech, Language, Communication Needs (SLCN)



Learner Profile	Supportive Strategies
<p>Speech</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech can be unclear to unfamiliar adults or out of context (whole words or individual sounds) • Differences in getting words out • Reluctant speaker • Phonological differences that impact reading and/or spelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention paid to position of child/young person in room, acoustics etc (eg close to an adult during partner-talk tasks so that adult can support, away from door to limit noise interference from corridor etc) • Cued articulation • Use of visual supports such as sound mats
<p>Language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited spoken language for their age • Difference understanding words that are said to them • Difference in understanding language for learning • Attention and concentration skills are delayed for age • May rely on non-verbal communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language being simplified as needed, break instructions into chunks etc. • Visual prompts and concrete apparatus to support learning • Use of Dictaphone, voice notes, talking tins • Attention buckets • Clicker 8 -Primary, Docs Plus -Secondary • Speech and Language group interventions - Time to Listen, Time to Talk, More Time to Talk, Early Talk Boost, Talk Boost KS1, Talk Boost KS2, NELI
<p>Social Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differences in relating to others • May struggle with social interactions and social cues • Differences interpreting emotions and other people's perspectives • Differences in social conversational skills • Solitary play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transporters (ASC emotion focused programme 4 – 8yrs) • Social and Communication Fix (range of interventions) • Whole class emotional check in and Emotion Coaching strategies i.e. label feelings and validate 'in the moment', zones of regulation. • Adults model appropriate coping strategies for emotional regulation and social problem solving • Meet and greet in a morning to help ease the transition into school, go through the plan for the day etc • Lunch and breaktime support (eg specific teaching of playground games to support child to join in at break times if they wish, access to a room if they choose not to go outside) • Think it, Say it • Safe space for child /young person to calm/refocus in or near the classroom • Buddy system to reduce isolation if the child/young person wants this • Playground leaders to model key social skills • Staff model appropriate social behaviour and interaction and support peer interactions. • Conversation starters/talk frames to support child/young person to communicate with classmates

SAVE THE DATE

COPRODUCTION EVENT

TUESDAY 30 JUNE 2026

Dear colleagues,

You are warmly invited to our SEND Co-production & Participation Relaunch Event, taking place on **Tuesday 30 June at the bet365 Stadium.**

This event is being co-designed by Stoke-on-Trent City Council's SEND team in partnership with KIDS, the Parent Carer Forum, and local children and young people. It will bring together professionals, families and young people to strengthen collaboration and ensure SEND voices remain central to shaping services across the city.

The main event will run from 1:00pm to 4:00pm, with a marketplace open from 11:30am, offering opportunities to network and connect with services and organisations.

Stallholders who have confirmed their attendance include: SENDIASS, Travel Training, SENMAS, ASIST Advocacy, Aiming High and Project Indi.

Booking is now open via Eventbrite – please use the QR code below to secure your place.

For enquiries or further information, please contact:
UniversalParticipation@stoke.gov.uk

We hope you can join us.

SEND
STOKE-ON-TRENT



Upcoming events

Autumn

Thursday 19th Nov 2026

Spring

Tuesday 9th March 2027

Summer

Wednesday 9th June 2027