

## BRIEFING NOTE

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Date: 14 December 2015

### SEND CODE OF PRACTICE: SEN SUPPORT IN EARLY YEARS SETTINGS, SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

### APPLYING THE ASSESS-PLAN-DO REVIEW CYCLE TO LEARNERS WITH A VISION IMPAIRMENT

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The SEND Code of Practice requires settings to apply a graduated response to meeting the needs of learners based on the assess-plan-do review cycle.

*Where a pupil is identified as having SEN, schools should take action to remove barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place. This SEN support should take the form of a four-part cycle through which earlier decisions and actions are revisited, refined and revised with a growing understanding of the pupil's needs and of what supports the pupil in making good progress and securing good outcomes. This is known as the graduated approach. It draws on more detailed approaches, more frequent review and more specialist expertise in successive cycles in order to match interventions to the SEN of children and young people.*

*para 6.44, DfE SEND Code of Practice<sup>1</sup>*

This briefing note is intended to help settings follow this approach.

#### 2. ASSESSING WHAT SUPPORT IS NEEDED

Vision impairment may impact on a range of areas that learners will require for successful learning, including

- educational progress – particularly in reading and writing and concept development, as vision impaired learners may not have access to the incidental learning through vision that is available to sighted learners.
- speed of working and access to information - most vision impaired learners will take longer to complete a task, but this should not be seen as reflecting on their ability and potential.
- communication skills – particularly reading and writing. Many learners with vision impairment will need to learn specialist skills to enable them to read and write on equal terms.
- learning style – an over-emphasis on visual learning will clearly disadvantage many learners with vision impairment, but it should not be assumed that all learners prefer a non-visual learning style.
- mobility and environmental awareness - a lack of incidental visual knowledge means that many learners, especially those with more severe vision impairment, will need to be taught the skills to navigate their environment independently and safely.
- social interaction – many learners with vision impairment find it hard to recognise non-verbal clues such as body language and facial expression and may need support in developing social skills.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/398815/SEND\\_Code\\_of\\_Practice\\_January\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf)

- self-esteem – there is a risk of learners developing low self-esteem, particularly if they experience negative attitudes and stereotyping.

An accurate and thorough understanding of a learner's needs and strengths underpins good planning and progress.

A good assessment should include

- the learner's aspirations and his or her evaluation of any support requirements
- the aspirations of the parents/carers for their child and their views on appropriate provision
- information on the learner's progress and attainment (on transition to primary, this would include information from their early years setting, to secondary school from their primary school, and to college from their secondary school)
- the involvement of specialists from education, social care and health such as a qualified teacher of learners with vision impairment (QTVI), registered qualified habilitation specialist, and where possible, ophthalmologist, orthoptist and/or optometrist
- the use of specialist assessments, for example to find out how well a learner makes use of any functional vision they possess
- identification of the need for training in specialist skills such as habilitation or the use of access technology
- required adjustments to visual, tactile and acoustic conditions in the setting to promote the learner's independence
- identification of specialist support needed to meet any specific subject requirements.

NatSIP's document *Better Assessment, Better Plans, Better Outcomes*<sup>2</sup> sets out information that can be used to inform the assessment.

### 3. PLANNING THE RIGHT SUPPORT

Plans should be developed with the learner (even when young), parents and the QTVI and should include:

- the outcomes the learner is expecting to achieve at the setting (see Appendix for definition and example)
- the steps and shorter term targets required to achieve the outcomes
- the provision and adjustments required to achieve the outcomes and targets or steps to meet needs and overcome any barriers to accessing teaching and learning. This would include ways to remove barriers to learning and participation for learners who have vision impairment, by making teaching and learning resources accessible, with support from external agencies where required
- arrangements for monitoring and reviewing.

The challenges presented by a vision impairment suggest that, for many learners, their plan is likely to include targets and/or support strategies in the following areas

- the development of literacy and communication skills
- the development of habilitation skills (mobility, independence and daily living activities)
- the provision and maintenance of access technology and training in its use
- the provision of support for the timely adaptation of resources e.g. by a trained teaching assistant or resource officer
- low vision assessments and prescription of low vision aids/magnifiers

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/send-reforms/ehc-plans>

- measures to ensure teaching and learning takes place in rooms which provide a good listening environment and have good acoustics
- regular input from specialist staff such as QTVI and habilitation worker, both for direct teaching of specialist skills (such as learning to read and write through braille) and for advisory work
- opportunities to preview and review lessons
- direct support from a trained teaching assistant where the content of lessons requires this
- specific teaching strategies and resources to ensure access to teaching and learning
- appropriate access arrangements for internal and external assessments/examinations
- any support required to improve self-esteem and social skills
- measures to develop independence skills including working unsupported in the classroom, the ability to use and maintain equipment and self-advocacy/self-determination skills
- access to specialist careers advice and planning for adulthood from year 9 onward
- awareness training for staff and other learners to ensure they understand the needs of the learner with vision impairment and what can be done to overcome barriers to learning and participation
- details of who is responsible for the overall co-ordination of the plan and who is responsible for delivering key aspects of the provision.

#### **4. DO: IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN**

The plan should set out who is responsible for the overall co-ordination and implementation of any plan. This would typically be the SENCO with support from the QTVI and habilitation worker. They will have responsibility for the following

- ensuring all staff involved in teaching and supporting learners with vision impairment receive the necessary information, advice, guidance and training to ensure the learner is supported and can access teaching and learning.
- ensuring the learner's progress is monitored.
- liaising with and obtaining feedback from the learner and parents on what is going well and not so well.
- ensuring that support and provision is in place (for example, trained teaching assistant, equipment, adjustments to teaching and learning spaces to improve visual and tactile environment and acoustics).
- ensuring teachers and teaching assistants implement interventions and strategies agreed as part of the support.

Further information can be found on the *RNIB website*<sup>3</sup> which provides advice on the reasonable adjustments settings can make to ensure teaching strategies meet the needs of learners with vision impairment including:

- Teaching strategies
- Social and emotional development
- Transition planning
- Specific subject support
- Adjustments to ensure equal access to examinations<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> [www.rnib.org.uk/](http://www.rnib.org.uk/)

<sup>4</sup> [www.rnib.org.uk/examaccess](http://www.rnib.org.uk/examaccess)

## 5. KEEPING THE SUPPORT UNDER REVIEW

The effectiveness of the support and its impact on the learner's progress should be regularly reviewed and evaluated, taking into account the learner's and parents' views. The review process should identify possible barriers to progress and what can be done to overcome them. The setting should have systems and processes in place for doing this.

Key areas that are related to the learner's vision impairment that may require consideration include the following:

- attainment and progress in areas of literacy
- attainment and progress and whether any gaps with other learners are widening or narrowing
- accessibility of the subject content - for example, checking if the learner is able to access learning materials and understand the content and concepts used
- effectiveness of adult support - for example, is the teaching assistant able to adapt learning materials accurately and encourage independent learning?
- effectiveness of access technology
- success in communicating with others, socialising and forming friendships
- ability to navigate the learning and social environment eg classroom and playground
- ability to learn independently, manage equipment and articulate their needs and preferences
- any changes to the learner's level of vision and the implications for future support.

Where the learner is not making the expected amount of progress, all aspects of the plan must be considered in detail, especially the strategies in place to ensure access to the curriculum and the development of independent learning. It is crucial to identify the source of difficulties and revise the plan and support strategies. A QTVI can provide specialist advice in this area and should be consulted. This is now the beginning of the new assess, plan, do review cycle.

## APPENDIX

### The Plan: A note on outcomes, steps and targets

*An outcome can be defined as the benefit or difference made to an individual as a result of an intervention. It should be personal and not expressed from a service perspective; it should be something that those involved have control and influence over, and while it does not always have to be formal or accredited, it should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound (SMART).*

*When an outcome is focused on education or training, it will describe what the expected benefit will be to the individual as a result of the educational or training intervention provided.*

*Para 9.6, SEND Code of Practice 2015*

Outcomes are not a description of the service being provided. For example, the provision of weekly support from a qualified teacher of learners with vision impairment is not an outcome. In this case, the outcome is what it is intended that the specialist teacher will help the learner to do that he or she cannot do now and by when this will be achieved.

To develop outcomes consider and list:

- the aspirations of the pupil and those of his or her parents
- the Special Educational Needs/challenges for the pupil identified from the thorough assessment.

Together they will provide the areas of focus which can then be turned into SMART outcomes.

#### **An example:**

Steven is in year two in a mainstream primary school. He is registered as severely sight impaired.

- **Aspiration:** Steven wants to be like the rest of the class and join in all activities with them, both in school and out of school. His parents would both like Steven to have more friends. In particular, they would like him to be able to bring friends home.
- **Assessments** indicate that he interacts well with adults and has formed relationships with one or two children in school. He is developing independent play at home in familiar surroundings.

#### **Outcome**

- By the end of Key Stage 1, Steven will enjoy the company of other children, interacting confidently with them in a range of situations, employing effective social and emotional skills.

An example of a step towards achieving this outcome could be:

- Steven will be able to play games where turn taking is needed.

The detailed *short term teaching targets* (for example, learning to use a ruler) would be set by the relevant teachers based on the assessment.

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