

1. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Support in Early Years

What Is an Early Years Setting?

Early years settings offer care and education to children from birth to age 5, before they start full-time school. These settings must follow the [Early Years Foundation Stage](#) (EYFS) statutory framework, which sets out the standards for:

- **Learning and Development** – Ensuring children are supported in acquiring the skills and knowledge they need to thrive.
- **Safeguarding and Welfare** – Making sure children are kept safe, healthy, and well cared for.
- **School Readiness** – Helping children gain the confidence and abilities they need to transition successfully into school

Early years settings include childminders, day nurseries, pre-schools, and nursery classes in primary or infant schools. All providers must be registered with Ofsted and meet the requirements of the EYFS framework to ensure high-quality care and education.

Support in an Early Years Setting

Whether your child attends a nursery, childminder, or a school-based nursery class, they will be cared for in a safe, nurturing environment that supports their learning, development, and wellbeing. Staff build strong relationships with children, helping them feel secure and confident. Each child is treated as an individual, with their interests and needs guiding their learning experiences. This helps children develop key skills such as communication, independence, and social interaction. These help them feel ready and excited for the transition to school.

Monitoring Progress

Early years practitioners understand child development and they will continuously observe and assess children's development and complete assessments such as the '2-year progress check'. This helps identify strengths and areas where extra support may be needed, and parents are kept informed through regular updates. These assessments allow early years practitioners to:

- Review a child's development and progress
- Identify any areas of concern or additional development needs



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It is important to remember that all children develop and learn at different rates and therefore a delay in learning and development does not always indicate that a child has a learning difficulty or disability.

Supporting Children with Additional Needs in the Early Years

If staff in your child's early years setting notice that your child may need extra help beyond what is usually provided through high-quality teaching, they will work closely with you to understand your child's needs and explore the right support.

This begins a process called SEN Support (Special Educational Needs Support), which may be referred to as 'Targeted' or 'Targeted Plus' support. The setting will follow a simple four-step cycle known as the Graduated Approach, sometimes called APDR:

1. **Assess** – Staff will observe and understand your child's strengths and any areas they may find more difficult.
2. **Plan** – Together with you, they'll create a plan to support your child's needs.
3. **Do** – The plan is put into action in the setting.
4. **Review** – You'll be invited to meet with staff to talk about how the plan is working and what the next steps should be.

If your child is receiving SEN Support, your child setting will review the plan with you every term to make sure it continues to meet your child's needs.

Is There Additional Funding?

The Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF) is a statutory funding stream available in England to support early years children (aged 0–5) with emerging or identified special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In Doncaster this is called Early Intervention Allowance (EIA).

If your child receives Disability Living Allowance, their early years provider may also be able to claim an annual payment called DAF (Disability Access Fund). This can be used to purchase specialist resources, make adaptations to the setting or allow the provider to access specialist training.

What Is Early Intervention Allowance (EIA) for?

EIA helps early years settings, such as nurseries, childminders, and school-based nursery classes, provide additional support for children whose needs cannot be met through the usual staffing and resources. This might include:

- Increasing adult-to-child ratios
- Providing specialist resources or interventions
- Supporting staff training to meet specific needs



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Who Can Access EIA?

A child may be eligible for EIA if:

- They have low-level or emerging special educational needs and/or disabilities
- They attend a registered early years provider (e.g. nursery, childminder, school nursery)

Children with more complex needs may instead require an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) – please see out separate factsheet.

How Is EIA Accessed?

- The early years provider or a professional working with your child must submit the application
- The setting must show evidence of following the Graduated Approach (Assess, Plan, Do, Review)
- You (the parent) must be involved in the process and give consent
- Funding is reviewed termly to ensure it continues to meet your child's needs.

What You Can Do:

If you believe your child may benefit from additional support, speak to your child's key person or the setting's SENCO. They can guide you through the process and explain whether EIA might be appropriate.

Visit Doncaster's Local Offer to read more about different [support services for children aged 0-5 years](#).

What if My Child Has a Medical Condition?

If your child has a medical condition, the setting will make sure they receive the right care and support. This may be written in a medical or health care plan, which is separate from the SEN Support Plan if the needs are not directly related.

Involving Other Services

Where a child continues to make less than expected progress, the early years setting may need to involve other services, for example, speech and language therapists, educational psychologists or the Early Years Inclusion Team (EYIT), who can offer support/recommendations to the setting to support your child further. The decision to involve specialists service should be discussed with you before a referral is made.



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Children Learning English as an Additional Language

If your child is learning English as an additional language, this does not mean they have special educational needs (SEN). Many children grow up speaking another language at home and learn English when they start attending an early years setting.

Early years staff are trained to support children who are developing their English skills. They will:

- Help your child feel welcome and included, even if they are still learning English.
- Use a range of strategies to support communication, such as gestures, visuals, and key words.
- Monitor your child's development across all areas of learning to make sure they are making good progress.
- Work closely with you to understand your child's home language and how best to support their learning.

If staff have any concerns about your child's development, they will talk to you and explore whether any additional support is needed. But learning English as a second language on its own is not considered a special educational need.

Funding for Childcare / Early Education

For support on funding available for early years, or to see which early years providers are within your area, you can look on the Families Information Service website: www.doncaster.gov.uk/FIS



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