

What is the definition of Special Educational Needs?

A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made, that is additional to, or different from, that made generally for other children or young people of the same age (Code of Practice 2015, p15)

The 2015 Code of Practice outlines support for young people in four broad areas

- Communication and interaction
- Cognition and learning
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health
- Sensory and/or physical

Communication and Interaction

Children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) have difficulty in communicating with others. This may be because they have difficulty saying what they want to, understanding what is being said to them or they do not understand or use social rules of communication. The profile for every child with SLCN is different and their needs may change over time. They may have difficulty with one, some or all of the different aspects of speech, language or social communication at different times of their lives.

Children and young people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, including Asperger's Syndrome and Autism, are likely to have particular difficulties with social interaction. They may also experience difficulties with language, communication, social interaction and imagination, which can impact on how they relate to others.

[**Communication and Interaction Resources from Durham County Council**](#)

Cognition and Learning

Support for learning difficulties may be required when children and young people learn at a slower pace than their peers, even with appropriate differentiation. Learning difficulties cover a wide range of needs, including moderate learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD), where children are likely to need support in all areas of the curriculum and associated difficulties with mobility and communication, through to profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), where children are likely to have severe and complex learning difficulties as well as a physical disability or sensory impairment.

Specific learning difficulties (SpLD), affect one or more specific aspects of learning. This encompasses a range of conditions such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia.

[**Cognition and Learning Resources from Durham County Council**](#)

Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties

Children and young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging or disruptive behavior. These behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Other children and young people may have disorders such as attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder.

[*Social, Emotional and Mental Health Resources from Durham County Council*](#)

Sensory and/or physical needs

Some children and young people require special educational provision because they have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of the educational facilities generally provided. These difficulties can be age related and may fluctuate over time. Many children and young people with vision impairment (VI), hearing impairment (HI) or a multi-sensory impairment (MSI) will require specialist support and/or equipment to access their learning.

Some children and young people with a physical disability (PD) require additional ongoing support and equipment to access all the opportunities available to their peers.

[*Sensory and Physical Resources from Durham County Council*](#)