What can I do to help an individual child?

For each area of need we have listed possible areas of concern and useful strategies to try at Early Years Action (EYA).

Communication and Interaction

Area of Concern -
The child who does not talk

Does s/he appear...

.. isolated and not communicating with adults or children?
.. happy enough and communicating well but not talking?

Strategies to try...

.. simple turn taking activities e.g. passing objects to each other, that does not involve talking
.. art, music and movement that is dance like, may offer a means of self expression and creativity when spoken language is difficult or not appropriate
.. to boost the child’s self-confidence and esteem by praising his other achievements
.. to provide opportunities for 1:1 play with an adult
.. to provide opportunities for talking in a non-pressured situation e.g. toy telephones, microphones,
.. looking at photographs, soft toys and puppets
.. using instruments or props at story time to help them to contribute
.. using materials and resources that children can access through sight, sound, touch and smell
Area of Concern - The child who does not respond to what you say

Does it appear that s/he is...

.. not hearing you?
.. not understanding what you say?
.. not interested in responding to people?
.. not listening to you?

Strategies to try..

.. asking parents to get the child’s hearing checked
.. using hand gestures or exaggerating facial expression to aid understanding
.. to encourage the child to look at your face and to focus his attention first
.. to be at the child’s eye level
.. to use simple short sentences
.. giving two choices that provide the child with the words he will need to use,
  e.g. ‘Would you like milk or juice?’ or ‘Do you want to play outside, yes or no?’
.. playing alongside the child, commenting without always expecting an answer
  e.g. ‘I love play dough’ ‘Chips are my favourite.’
.. providing vocabulary to accompany the child’s play

Area of Concern - The child whose conversation seems very babyish

Is s/he...

.. late in learning to talk and now catching up?
.. showing an overall developmental delay?

Strategies to try..

.. to model mature but simple language in play
.. using songs and rhymes to help extend vocabulary
Area of Concern - The child who is dysfluent

N.B. S/He may well be unaware of this and should certainly remain so! Dysfluency is a normal stage of language development.

Is s/he ...

...repeating or prolonging a sound or word
...stumbling over sounds or words
...getting stuck or hesitating before the word is said

Strategies to try.....

...to maintain a calm relaxed atmosphere
...to make comments rather than asking direct questions
...to ensure that s/he has time to tell you things. (do not try to guess what s/he is trying to say)
...not to discuss his 'stammer' in front of him

Area of Concern - The child whose pronunciation is difficult to understand

Is s/he...

...using pronunciation typical of his environment
  e.g. local dialect, family accent?
...generally immature with pronunciation typical of a younger child?
...finding it difficult to produce a range of speech sounds?

Strategies to try.....

...using mouth sounds in action songs
  e.g. 'If you're happy and you know it wriggle your tongue'
...using a range of sounds in imaginative play
  e.g. dolls coughing or yawning, making vehicle noises
...involving blowing and lip closure in various activities e.g. bubbles, instruments, mmmm noises, blow football, straws
Area of Concern - The child who uses language in an unusual way

Does s/he appear to be...

- echoing speech of others inappropriately
- repeating remembered phrases?
- finding it difficult to interpret and use facial and vocal expression?
- talking without any obvious purpose?
- fearful of new situations?

Strategies to try.....

- turn taking and eye contact in games where talking isn’t involved
- communicating using gestures and actions
- careful routines and gentle reassurance to overcome anxieties

Early years settings also have access to the ‘i-Can Talk’ video - ‘Helping children’s speech and language development in the early years’. It raises awareness and understanding of children’s speech and language development and provides practitioners with examples of more and less talkative children, and techniques of good practice. This can be accessed, on loan, from your Area SENCo or Speech and Language Therapy department. Requests to Speech and Language Therapists can be made by parents/carers, early years practitioners or other outside agencies involved with the child, but only with parental permission. Every early years setting should have their own copy of “Early Intervention for Children with Socialisation and/or Communication Difficulties”. Please contact your Area SENCo if you need a copy.
Cognition and Learning

Additional or different needs cannot be addressed simply by a differentiated curriculum and activities. Such needs require an individual teaching approach or strategy in order to remove the specific barrier to learning. The Foundation Stage Curriculum Guidance provides advice to support planning for children with SEN and/or disabilities (pages 18 and 19).

As previously stated the Code of Practice has a strong emphasis on inclusion and differentiation, which should be remembered when considering the need for IEPs.

The question for practitioners to consider when making the decision about the need for an IEP, with additional or different targets, is: "What learning activities or behavioural approaches are we going to provide for this child that other children do not need. What outcomes are we aiming for as a result of the intervention?"

Behavioural, Emotional and Social Development

Children are very active. They need considerable help to settle, to learn and find out what is allowed/not allowed and this requires much of your patience. Children respond to a clear, consistent routine. They need to know what will happen next and when. Children need to be given time to process what you have said to them. By repeating an instruction and substituting words you are requiring the child to reprocess the information all over again.

Area of Concern - Behavioural needs

Does his/her behaviour sometimes appear ...

  destructive?
  disobedient – overtly or by quiet non-compliance?
  testing rules and boundaries?
  hurting others physically?

Strategies to try.....

..to describe the behaviour to each other clearly (i.e. what you can see or hear the child doing) to ensure the adults are consistent in how to handle incidences of disruptive behaviour

..to observe the child more closely to note when inappropriate* behaviour occurs. This recording can be done on an "ABC" sheet, see Appendix 6
- What triggered the behaviour? (A = Antecedent = what was happening immediately before the behaviour occurred)
- What did the child do? (B = Behaviour itself = what the child actually did) - This may help determine a pattern.
- What were the consequences? (C = Consequences = what happened next?)

*It is also important to note down appropriate behaviours as this helps to build up a pattern of times and situations when the child is behaving as you would wish them to.

- to offer the opportunity to play alongside an adult – give clear information to the child
- to concentrate on just one or two behaviours causing most concern in a child
- to define the behaviour you want to change and handle it consistently
- to praise appropriately and consistently, and give the child attention, without the need to seek it
- to name the praised behaviour – e.g. “Thank you for sharing with John”
- to catch and reward the ‘good’ or wanted behaviours you see
- to help the child avoid situations where problem behaviour is likely to occur
- to cut down the number of choices so that the child knows exactly what is expected
- to give clear and simple instructions
- to give plenty of warning for a change of activity or routine so that they can hold this idea in their minds
- to use musical and/or visual prompts or references to signal a change of activity
- to keep to a few rules but repeat them together frequently
- to tell the child what to do rather than what not to do e.g. “stop”, “put your hands in your lap”, “sit down”
- to use hands and body gestures to aid understanding
- to make some ‘environmental prompts’ such as “stop” signs on light switches or taps and then praise the child for reading them
- to be realistic in what you are expecting of the child
- to enable children to talk about what happened, their own feelings and different points of view e.g. “I feel angry today because I wanted to wear my red shoes”
Area of Concern - Social and emotional development

Does s/he appear to be

..finding it hard to relate to other children or form relationships
..unable to share or be part of a group situation

Strategies to try.....

..to role model for the child how to get involved in a group situation and to encourage persistence.
..to role model turn taking, involving other children one at a time.
..to teach openers such as “Can I play with you?”
   “Will you play with me?” “Let’s play together.”
..to allow the child to watch other children and talk about what they are doing
..follow the child’s lead to see what interest them and use opportunities to include other children if appropriate
..to introduce group situations e.g. story time on a one to one basis first, gradually including other children, before expecting to be part of a larger group
..to exaggerate your facial expressions and hand gestures to emphasise meaning
..to have activities that must be shared – seesaws, 'row row row your boat' songs etc.
..pair and group work – large junk modelling, collaborative painting, push along wheeled trolleys etc.

Further strategies are included in the folder "Early Intervention for Children with Socialisation and/or Communication Difficulties" or contact your Area SENCo
Sensory and/or Physical

Area of Concern - sensory needs

Many early years children experience temporary, fluctuating or even permanent hearing loss. Some children experience visual difficulties and a few experience both. If you are concerned about a child's hearing or vision speak with the parents/carers and with the Health Visitor.

In some cases a Teacher of the Visually Impaired or Hearing Impaired from Children and Families will be involved prior to the child attending the setting. This support will follow the child into the setting. Continued advice and support will be given in close liaison with the child, parents/carers, practitioners and your Area SENCo.

A child with visual/hearing impairment needs the same play opportunities as any other child. If you find out about their individual needs, you can then plan for opportunities that they might have missed due to their sensory impairment.

Parents of very young children will need supporting to recognise that children with sensory impairment or learning difficulties, like all children, will have a favourite place, toy or activity.
Some babies who are blind or deaf or who have severe learning difficulties need constant reminders that you are there, and that they are valued.
Visual impairment - Strategies to try

.. choose brightly coloured toys and play things that attract visual attention
.. create contrast by using dark objects against a light background or vice versa
.. use toys that make a sound or are interesting to feel
.. make sure areas are well lit and that light is shining onto the object or person that you wish the child to see. For children whose eyes are very light-sensitive, you may also need to plan shady areas for comfort
.. choose sounds to go with different areas of the setting. Wind chimes can inform a child not only where a door is, but also where other things are in relation to the door, for example......“The water tray is near the door”
.. have well-defined areas for keeping toys and materials, so that a child with visual difficulties can always find them. Textured and shaped mats on shelves can tell blind children where something belongs. Textured floor areas will enable them to “map” the room and remember where things are
.. where possible, use carpeting, curtains and soft furnishings to absorb sound, thereby making sounds easier to hear and locate
.. be aware that children with restricted vision may not see you coming. Approach them from the front, if possible, and say the child’s name so that they can identify you from your voice
.. always use the child’s name when you start to talk, and mention who you are. Use all the other children’s names as well so that the child who cannot see well knows who you are addressing
.. sit the children with near-sight close to the front during discussions and story time. Use concrete props, such as a character to hold or a story sack to explore, as well as pictures
.. borrow picture books with large print from your local library. The library service can also supply a range of tactile books, smell books and interactive books
.. as a group sing songs that will help a child with little vision to get to know everyone’s name quickly
.. consider slightly sloping surfaces to make tabletop activities easier to see. Attach white tape to the edge of tables and shelves to make it easier for a child with limited vision to see
.. shaking the baby’s bottle before it touches the baby’s lips to help the baby anticipate that it is coming
Hearing impairments - Strategies to try

.. make sure you have the child's attention before speaking. Make eye contact, use their name and keep your words clear and simple
.. ensure background noise is kept down by using soft surfaces to absorb sound
.. make sure that the areas in your setting are well lit so that you can see faces clearly. If you are sitting in front of a sunny window, your mouth will not be seen
.. speak clearly and slowly and do not shout. Find out all you can about the child's usual method of communication and link into this
.. keep up to date with any signs that the child might be using, so that you can use and understand these to clarify speech
.. teach all the children some simple signs to accompany action songs and activities
.. make a note of unusual words or any words that the child does not understand, so that you can build the correct words into their practical experiences
.. supplement the use of your voice with touch, gesture, and facial expression, encouraging others to do the same

Area of Concern - Physical needs

Does s/he appear to have difficulties...

.. adjusting speed or changing direction to avoid obstacles
.. negotiating space successfully; or
.. is anxious about physical activity

Strategies to try...

.. to give clear rules which can be understood
.. to give the child time to explore the space in their own time
.. to help the child recognise when help is needed and how to ask for it
.. to grade the difficulty of the apparatus so that success is guaranteed
.. to set very small goals and to praise the child's achievement
.. to encourage confidence e.g. jumping from a blanket onto the floor, then from a shallow plank onto the floor etc
.. to allow more nervous children exclusive use of the play area from time to time
.. to use velcro or non-slip mats to anchor/stabilise objects
.. to use easy to grasp objects to encourage hold and release e.g. softballs, cotton wool, and beanbags
.. adapting activities or environments, providing alternative activities and using specialist aids and equipment, where appropriate
.. provision of furniture which enables a child with physical difficulties to eat with other children recognises the importance of mealtimes as a social occasion for everyone