



SEND Early Years Assessment Guidance.



Lee Friend is the Chief Operating Officer at Dingley's Promise which is a national Early Years SEND Charity supporting thousands of children and their families over their 40 years to transform the early years for Children with SEND. Lee Oversees the current 9 centres across the South of England and works with lots of different Local Authorities to expand their offer and to roll out new centres across England enabling the charity to reach more children and more families to get the right support for them at the earliest opportunity.

In September 2024, the DfE launched the new Early Years SEND Assessment Toolkit which was created in partnership with Dingley's Promise. The aims of the Guidance are to promote a child-centred, strengths-based method to assessing the needs of children within Early Years which will enable tailored support for each individual child supporting them in their journey to achieve their full potential.

The reason for the new guidance was to support children's needs to be identified as early as possible and for the right high-quality support to be given through early intervention. One of the common conversations within the Early Years Workforce was also to reduce the workload and paperwork as well as preventing parents from having to continuously repeat their stories. One of the other common themes was to build the confidence of our Early Years Teams and the families they support by having a clear, simple and celebratory approach to assessment while enabling professionals to have a common language and structure to use to prevent confusion and the use of jargon.

We know that no development is linear and that each child's journey is valid and should be understood in context of their lived experiences. The Assessment Toolkit supports the assessment of non-linear development, providing a simple methodology to identify and meet their needs as soon as possible, which prevents the delay in support being given to each child. It's about giving the right support at the right time whilst seeing the child in their own unique way.

There are four assessment tools, that reflect the four broad areas of need, with a focus on the core skills children with SEND may obtain in each area. Children will develop at their own unique rates and not every child will follow a "typical" pattern of progression or development. It's important to remember that this does not limit a child's ability to make progress or take away from focusing on the child's individual strengths and using that celebratory approach and language.

The assessment tools which are provided promote a positive view of the child by working towards a series of “I can” statements and so supporting you to recognise and think about what the child is able to achieve and the ways in which they can do this. The “I can” statements are then grouped within specific skill areas that also showcase the skills the child is developing.

The statements which are in the toolkit have been created using the SEND code of practice and the four broad areas of need, research, and a range of observations and reference materials from within our centres, supporting children with SEND. Using real life development, research in children’s development and learning alongside the SEND code of practice. Looking at the EYFS and breaking these outcomes into more achievable, adaptable and positive stages so that it can be a celebratory approach which enables a more positive style of working for families and professionals.

References and Links

Below are the links to the DfE SEND Assessment Guidance as well as the SEND Code of Practice and Early Years Foundation Stage which feed into guidance and are beneficial accompaniments. We’ve also included a link to the Dingley’s Promise Training where you can find further information regarding the 7 short course we have to promote Early Years Inclusion.

[Help for early years providers : SEND assessment guidance and resources](#)

[SEND Code of Practice January 2015.pdf](#)

[EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers](#)

[About Our Training - Dingley's Promise](#)