

Communication and Interaction Needs Guidance

Threshold Descriptors Overview	
Threshold 1	
Mild	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the EYFS as a guide and being mindful that every child is unique, the child’s developmental profile may broadly show the following level of delay or emerging needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At 2 years functioning at or below emerging 16-26 months - At 3 years functioning at or below emerging 22-36 months - At 4 years functioning at or below emerging 30-50 months - At 5 years functioning at or below emerging 40-60 months • May develop spoken language at a slower rate than peers. • Some difficulties with understanding of language. • May demonstrate limited understanding of non-verbal cues. • Some immature speech sounds. Requires help with key words. Requires repetition from an adult. • May have English as an additional language. • Difficulty being understood by adults outside the family. • Some difficulties in interactions with peers; may need adult prompting. • May display shorter attention span in comparison to peers. • Range of noises and sounds in babble limited.
Threshold 2	
Mild - Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MILD but persistent difficulties and is not making expected progress despite a range of interventions and Quality First Teaching, implemented over time and reviewed regularly. • Using the EYFS as a guide and being mindful that every child is unique, the child’s developmental profile may broadly show the following level of delay: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At 2 years functioning at or below developing 8-20 months - At 3 years functioning at or below developing 16-26 months - At 4 years functioning at or below developing 22-36 months - At 5 years functioning at or below developing 30-50 months • Difficulty following or understanding instructions and everyday language without visual references. • Adults have difficulty understanding speech without it being in context. • Poor enunciation/clarity of speech/making noises/sounds. • Immaturity in socialisation. Older age range looks towards adults rather than peers. Some difficulties with social communication and interaction. • Lack of awareness of social space and related social difficulties. • Difficulties forming and maintaining friendships with peers. • Younger age range – not linking with an important adult. Lack of playing with sound/noise/babble.

Threshold 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MODERATE and persistent difficulties and is not making expected progress despite a level of focused intervention and implementation of advice and recommendations from external agencies and the provision of Quality First Teaching, implemented over time and reviewed regularly. • Using the EYFS as a guide and being mindful that every child is unique, the child’s developmental profile may broadly show the following level of delay: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At 2 years functioning at or below emerging 8-20 months - At 3 years functioning at or below emerging 16-26months - At 4 years functioning at or below emerging 22-36 months - At 5 years functioning at or below emerging 30-50 months 	
Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mild to moderate delay in expressive and/ or receptive language requiring regular SALT input. • Has reduced vocabulary both receptively and expressively impacting on learning and retention of new words. • May display some loss of previously demonstrated communication skills. • Difficulty communicating or expressing feelings or needs. • Limited ability to understand the impact of their actions on others. • Becoming increasingly isolated with peers. • Limited initiation of social interaction – limited noises/ babble, limited response to adult interactions: physical/ verbal responses. 	
Threshold 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SIGNIFICANT persistent difficulties and is not making expected progress despite significant levels of focused intervention and implementation of advice and recommendations from external agencies and the provision of Quality First Teaching, implemented over time and reviewed regularly. • Using the EYFS as a guide and being mindful that every child is unique, the child’s developmental profile shows at least the following broad levels of delay: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At 2 years functioning at or below developing 0-11 months - At 3 years functioning at or below developing 8-20 months - At 4 years functioning at or below developing 16-26 months - At 5 years functioning at or below developing 22-36 months • Moderate to severe language and/or speech sound disorder/ limited language or babble. • Uses mix of speech and alternative communication methods such as visuals, Makaton, BSL and/or augmented communication systems. 	
Significant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments show child is working at least 2 age and stages below chronological age in at most areas of language, communication and social interaction skills. • May avoid communication or use extremely limited non-verbal communication when in a speaking situation. • Avoids interactions with others. • Displays tendency to withdraw from social and group learning activities. • Appears unaware of others. • Displays difficulties expressing emotions. • Persistent and significant difficulties engaging in social interactions and forming relationships with others. • Difficulties in relation to understanding and interpretation of social interactions and social situations. 	

Threshold 5

Severe

- **SEVERE persistent difficulties** and is not making expected progress despite significant levels of focused intervention and implementation of advice and recommendations from external agencies and the provision of Quality First Teaching, implemented over time and reviewed regularly. Using the EYFS as a guide and being mindful that every child is unique, the child's developmental profile shows at least the following broad levels of delay:
 - At 2 years functioning at emerging 0-11 months
 - At 3 years functioning at or below emerging 8-20 months
 - At 4 years functioning at or below emerging 16-26 months
 - At 5 years functioning at or below emerging 22-36 months
- Severe delay in receptive and/ or expressive language.
- Very limited understanding of what is said or signed.
- Communicates by emotion, gesture, eye pointing or symbols.
- Cannot independently access play experiences.
- May display sustained loss of communication skills previously demonstrated.
- Unable to speak or communicate in the setting which hasn't improved over the last 3 months and is having a significant impact on their ability to access the learning environment.
- Frequent and significant difficulties following adult direction due to difficulties with understanding of language.
- Withdrawal from social and group learning activities which are severely impacting on learning.
- Significant evidence of persistent repetitive play and restricted interests.
- Inability to form relationships/unable to tolerate social interaction other than to get needs met.
- No understanding of social boundaries.
- Severe and persistent high anxiety levels requiring intensive support.
- Functions at a level that requires considerable and specialised interventions and adaptations to the EYFS environment and curriculum.

Threshold 1 - Communication and Interaction

Child's Presentation	Assessment and Planning	Teaching and Learning Strategies/ Curriculum and Interventions
<p>Using the EYFS as a guide and being mindful that every child is unique, the developmental profile may broadly show the following level of delay/emerging need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At 2 years functioning at or below emerging 16-26 months • At 3 years functioning at or below emerging 22-36 months • At 4 years functioning at or below emerging 30-50 months • At 5 years functioning at or below emerging 40-60 months <p>Cognitive abilities broadly lie within age-related expectations as evidenced by EYFS ages and stages, however the child may be easily distracted and require prompts to remain on task, may need adult encouragement to remain engaged in play and/or may struggle to concentrate on adult-directed activities (more than would be expected for a child of that age range and observed over time).</p>	<p>Setting to liaise with the family/ carer and gather information relating to the child.</p> <p>Discussion re family engagement with supporting agencies.</p> <p>Setting to supplement usual systems of assessment and planning with additional observations, and across a range of contexts e.g., outdoors, lunchtime. Progress to be monitored for at least 2 terms.</p> <p>Termly/half-termly (as appropriate) review of child's progress in relation to the EYFS.</p> <p>Good use of Quality First teaching with close reference to the EYFS developmental profile.</p> <p>Use of Early Support Developmental Journal as best practice to support small step approach to learning.</p> <p>Possible attendance at more than one setting must be taken into consideration.</p> <p>Consider early referral to SALT where understanding is identified as a difficulty.</p> <p>Use of the ECAT assessment can identify areas of specific need in SLC which are linked.</p>	<p>Emphasis on providing an enabling environment inside and outside with developmentally appropriate resources. Use of photographs and child's learning journal alongside adult observation and assessments to enable monitoring.</p> <p>Effective differentiation of activities, in terms of adult engagement, levels of language and visual prompts, to enable learning at a level appropriate to the child.</p> <p>Any planned interventions involve the parent/carers, child, SENDCo and key person.</p> <p>Use of Quality First teaching and monitoring through EYFS levels.</p> <p>Flexible grouping strategy to focus adult support where needed.</p> <p>Continuous provision enhanced, directed and targeted.</p> <p>Implementation of reasonable adjustments to the EYFS environments and curriculum.</p> <p>ECAT/ICAN strategies.</p>

Threshold 2 - Communication and Interaction

Child's Presentation	Assessment and Planning	Teaching and Learning Strategies/ Curriculum and Interventions
<p>Presentation to be considered in line with child's age and appropriate developmental stage.</p> <p>MILD but persistent difficulties and is not making expected progress despite a range of interventions and Quality First Teaching, implemented over time and reviewed regularly.</p> <p>Using the EYFS as a guide and being mindful that every child is unique, the child's developmental profile may broadly show the following level of delay:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At 2 years functioning at or below developing 8-20 months • At 3 years functioning at or below developing 16-26 months • At 4 years functioning at or below developing 22-36 months • At 5 years functioning at or below developing 30-50 months <p>Difficulty following or understanding instructions and everyday language without visual references.</p> <p>Adults have difficulty understanding speech without it being in context.</p> <p>Poor enunciation/clarity of speech/making noises/sounds.</p> <p>Immaturity in socialisation. Older age range looks towards adults rather than peers. Some difficulties with social communication and interaction.</p> <p>Lack of awareness of social space and related social difficulties.</p> <p>Difficulties forming and maintaining friendships with peers.</p> <p>Younger age range – not linking with an important adult. Lack of playing with sound/noise/babble.</p>	<p>As Threshold 1 plus:</p> <p>SENDCo involved in ongoing observation as EYFS profile shows child is not making expected progress towards age-related expectations.</p> <p>Support plan with SMART targets in place, if moving to SEND support level from Quality First teaching, otherwise continue with EYFS developmental records. Supervision and monitoring of the support plan by SENDCo. Professionals to be involved in the termly review process.</p> <p>Clear assessment relating to IMPACT of the intervention strategies to guide next steps.</p> <p>Setting to liaise with parent/carer.</p> <p>Referral to SaLT.</p> <p>Consider referral to 0-4 Referral Meeting. Begin to collate relevant developmental evidence.</p>	<p>Emphasis on providing an enabling environment inside and outside with developmentally appropriate resources. Use of photographs and child's learning journal alongside adult observation and assessments to enable monitoring of progress.</p> <p>Increased differentiation of activities and materials to reflect developmental and language levels, and a focus on implementing key learning outcomes.</p> <p>Planned interventions involve as Threshold 1 + SENDCo and other professionals.</p> <p>Clarity on support given at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous provision • Enhanced • Targeted <p>Flexible grouping strategy, evidenced in support plan, to focus adult support where needed.</p> <p>Additional adult support may be required for some activities (group and individual), and to implement support plan targets or EYFS targeted areas.</p> <p>Access to ICT and specialist equipment/materials.</p> <p>Use of Makaton, intensive interaction, and visual approaches to supporting the developing of language and interaction skills.</p> <p>Access and use of 'autism friendly' strategies/focus upon social play and interaction skills.</p> <p>Implementation of reasonable adjustments to the EYFS environments and curriculum.</p> <p>Staff training needs are addressed.</p> <p>Draw on ICAN/ELKLAN strategies.</p> <p>Use of specific interventions such as BLAST and TALKBOOST.</p>

Threshold 3 - Communication and Interaction

Child's Presentation	Assessment and Planning	Teaching and Learning Strategies/ Curriculum and Interventions
<p>Presenting behaviours to be considered in line with child's age and appropriate developmental stage.</p> <p>MODERATE and persistent difficulties and is not making expected progress despite a level of focused intervention and implementation of advice and recommendations from external agencies and the provision of Quality First Teaching, implemented over time and reviewed regularly.</p> <p>Using the EYFS as a guide and being mindful that every child is unique, the child's developmental profile may broadly show the following level of delay:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At 2 years functioning at or below emerging 8-20 months • At 3 years functioning at or below emerging 16-26months • At 4 years functioning at or below emerging 22-36 months • At 5 years functioning at or below emerging 30-50 months <p>Mild to moderate delay in expressive and/or receptive language requiring regular SALT input.</p> <p>Has reduced vocabulary both receptively and expressively impacting on learning and retention of new words.</p> <p>May display some loss of previously demonstrated communication skills.</p> <p>Difficulty communicating or expressing feelings or needs.</p> <p>Limited ability to understand the impact of their actions on others.</p> <p>Becoming increasingly isolated with peers.</p> <p>Limited initiation of social interaction – limited noises/babble, limited response to adult interactions: physical/verbal responses.</p>	<p>Observations and EYFS developmental assessment identify on-going needs and delayed progress in relation to age related expectations.</p> <p>SENDCo involved in ongoing observation. Profile shows child is not making expected progress despite significant levels of focused intervention and implementation of advice from external agencies.</p> <p>Referral to 0-4 Meeting for involvement of additional services as appropriate. (Portage/SALT/CDT/OT etc).</p> <p>Support plan with SMART targets takes account of specialist advice and details additional adult input in relation to staffing ratios for specific time periods.</p> <p>Plan details support in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous provision • Enhanced • Targeted <p>Interventions/strategies are assessed for IMPACT on progress.</p> <p>Assess-Plan-Do-Review process implemented.</p> <p>Consider referral to EP.</p>	<p>Emphasis on providing an enabling environment inside and outside with developmentally appropriate resources. Use of photographs and child's learning journal alongside adult observation and assessments to enable monitoring of progression.</p> <p>Increased differentiation of activities and materials to reflect developmental and language levels, and a focus on key learning outcomes from support plan.</p> <p>Differentiation may include deployment of additional adults to support planned interventions within:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous provision • Enhanced • Targeted <p>Increased focus on planned interventions, may continue with BLAST and TALKBOOST. As a baseline provision ICAN and ELKLAN strategies implemented throughout with targeted individualised interventions included in accordance with recommendations from SALT, EP</p> <p>Interventions and staffing ratios evidenced within support plan.</p> <p>Increased focus on specific activities and/or use of resources, including ICT and specialist equipment/ materials/ communication aids. Visual timetable, clear routines, preparation for change and activity transitions</p> <p>Use of Makaton, intensive interaction and visual approaches to supporting the development of language and interaction skills</p> <p>Access and use of Autism friendly strategies/ social play and interaction skills</p> <p>Staff may need access to specific specialist training.</p> <p>Consideration given to the 'sensory' environment and planned sensory breaks following a three-step approach: sensory activity, adult directed activity, and child led activity. Repetition of these steps to enable the child to engage effectively.</p> <p>Implementation of reasonable adjustments to the EYFS environments and curriculum.</p>

Threshold 4 - Communication and Interaction

Child's Presentation	Assessment and Planning	Teaching and Learning Strategies/ Curriculum and Interventions
<p>SIGNIFICANT persistent difficulties and is not making expected progress despite significant levels of focused intervention and implementation of advice and recommendations from external agencies and the provision of Quality First teaching, implemented over time and reviewed regularly.</p> <p>Using the EYFS as a guide and being mindful that every child is unique, the child's developmental profile shows at least the following broad levels of delay:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At 2 years functioning at or below developing 0-11 months • At 3 years functioning at or below developing 8-20 months • At 4 years functioning at or below developing 6-26 months • At 5 years functioning at or below developing 22-36 months <p>Moderate to severe language and /or speech sound disorder/ limited language or babble.</p> <p>Uses mix of speech and alternative communication methods such as visuals, Makaton, BSL and/or augmented communication systems.</p> <p>Assessments show child is working at least 2 age and stages below chronological age in at most areas of language, communication and social interaction skills.</p> <p>May avoid communication or use extremely limited non-verbal communication when in a speaking situation.</p> <p>Avoids interactions with others.</p> <p>Displays tendency to withdraw from social and group learning activities.</p> <p>Appears unaware of others.</p> <p>Displays difficulties expressing emotions.</p> <p>Persistent and significant difficulties engaging in social interactions and forming relationships with others.</p>	<p>SENDCo involved in on-going observation. Support in place from relevant external agencies in line with agency referral processes and strategies and support implemented and evidenced within support plans and review documentation often supported by Portage, i.e. individual action plans, developmental journals, sensory programmes and learning profiles.</p> <p>High level modifications to learning environment and the breaking down of tasks into small steps following Portage principles within an individualised curriculum.</p> <p>Progress is closely monitored by the school/ setting and recorded using setting tracking systems in line with EYFS, and Early Support Developmental Journals. Outside agency recommendations and careful monitoring of IMPACT of strategies and intervention.</p> <p>Support plan with SMART targets takes account of any specialist advice. Joint Portage/SaLT assessment/ advice as part of Early Communication Pathway.</p> <p>Termly/ half-termly review of child's progress towards outcomes/targets on individualised learning/support plan following assess-plan-do-review process. Involvement of parents/carers and key professionals.</p> <p>Consideration given to application for an Education Health and Care needs assessment on basis of levels of development and complexity of need. Next steps to be determined in consultation with relevant professionals and parents/carers.</p>	<p>Emphasis on providing an enabling, accessible and adapted environment inside and outside with developmentally appropriate resources. Use of photographs and child's learning journal alongside adult observation and assessments to enable monitoring.</p> <p>Increased differentiation of activities and materials to reflect developmental levels and acquisition of early learning skills, and a focus on key learning outcomes from support plan.</p> <p>SENDCo and key worker implement advice given by external support services.</p> <p>Planning of interventions involve all advising agencies and reflect very clear multi agency strategies and approaches.</p> <p>Planned adult deployment to target support within:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous provision • Enhanced • Targeted <p>Increased focus on individualised planned interventions, with regular targeted and focused adult attention and interventions for individual/ group activities following specialist advice.</p> <p>Grouping strategies used flexibly to enhance learning and access to the curriculum.</p> <p>Increased focus on specific activities and/ or use of resources, including ICT and specialist equipment/ materials/ communication aids.</p> <p>Implementation of reasonable adjustments to the EYFS environments and curriculum.</p> <p>Multi-sensory approaches used to support access to EYFS.</p>

Threshold 5 - Communication and Interaction

Child's Presentation	Assessment and Planning	Teaching and Learning Strategies/ Curriculum and Interventions
<p>SEVERE to PROFOUND persistent difficulties and is not making expected progress despite significant levels of focused intervention and implementation of advice and recommendations from external agencies and the provision of Quality First Teaching, implemented over time and reviewed regularly.</p> <p>Using the EYFS as a guide and being mindful that every child is unique, the child's developmental profile shows at least the following broad levels of delay:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At 2 years functioning at emerging 0-11 months • At 3 years functioning at or lower than emerging 8-20 months • At 4 years functioning at or lower than emerging 16-26 months <p>Severe delay in receptive and/ or expressive language.</p> <p>Very limited understanding of what is said or signed.</p> <p>Communicates by emotion, gesture, eye pointing or symbols.</p> <p>Cannot independently access play experiences.</p> <p>May display sustained loss of communication skills previously demonstrated.</p> <p>Unable to speak or communicate in the setting which hasn't improved over the last 3 months and is having a significant impact on their ability to access the learning environment.</p> <p>Frequent and significant difficulties following adult direction due to difficulties with understanding of language.</p> <p>Withdrawal from social and group learning activities which are severely impacting on learning.</p> <p>Significant evidence of persistent repetitive play and restricted interests.</p> <p>Inability to form relationships/ unable to tolerate social interaction other than to get needs met. No understanding of social boundaries.</p> <p>Severe and persistent high anxiety levels requiring intensive support.</p> <p>Functions at a level that requires considerable and specialised interventions and adaptations to the EYFS environment and curriculum.</p>	<p>As Thresholds 1 - 4 plus:</p> <p>SENDCo involved in ongoing observation. Support in place from relevant external agencies in line with agency referral processes and strategies and support implemented and evidenced within support plans and review documentation.</p> <p>High level modifications to learning environment and breaking down of tasks into small steps within an individualised curriculum.</p> <p>Progress is closely monitored by the school/ setting and recorded using setting tracking systems in line with EYFS, and Early Support Developmental Journals. Outside agency recommendations and careful monitoring of IMPACT of strategies and interventions.</p> <p>Support plan with SMART targets takes account of specialist advice.</p> <p>Termly/half-termly review of child's progress towards targets on individualised learning/support plan.</p> <p>Complete and submit application for an Education Health and Care needs assessment on basis of levels of development and complexity of need. Multi agency SEND support planning meeting arranged in line with EHCP assessment processes.</p> <p>Continue with planned strategies and interventions in accordance with recommendations from relevant professionals as detailed within child's individualised support plan.</p>	<p>Emphasis on providing an enabling, accessible and adapted environment inside and outside with developmentally appropriate resources. Use of photographs and child's learning journal alongside adult observation and assessments to enable monitoring of progression. Additional individualised risk assessments completed where appropriate.</p> <p>Increased differentiation of activities and materials to reflect developmental and language levels, and a focus on key learning outcomes from support plan.</p> <p>SENDCo and key worker implement advice given by external support services. Extensive specialist input and advice followed.</p> <p>Planning of interventions involve all advising agencies and reflect very clear multi agency strategies and approaches.</p> <p>Planned adult deployment to target support within continuous provision and any other appropriate areas.</p> <p>Increased focus on individualised planned interventions, daily trained adult attention and support for individual/group activities following specialist advice.</p> <p>Grouping strategies used flexibly to enhance learning and access to the curriculum.</p> <p>Increased focus on specific activities and/ or use of resources, including ICT and specialist equipment/ materials/communication aids.</p> <p>Implementation of reasonable adjustments to the EYFS environment and curriculum. The environment should incorporate a total communication approach.</p> <p>Multi-sensory approaches used to support access to EYFS.</p>

PfA Outcomes and Provision

Employability/Education	Independence	Community Participation	Health
<p>Child is able to engage in aspects of real-world/role play and show developing awareness of the tasks carried out by different professionals (doctor, nurse, firefighter, police officer).</p> <p>Child is able to show interest in activities and resources within the nursery environment and will engage in aspects of exploratory, functional and sensory play, demonstrating developing understanding of the world around them.</p> <p>Child is able to show developing imagination through substitution and representation of objects within play (using a cardboard tube to represent a phone, for example).</p> <p>Child is able to begin to make meaningful choices between objects and activities.</p> <p>Child will show increased listening skills and task focus.</p>	<p>Child is able to make choices between options offered at snack and mealtimes.</p> <p>Child has an understanding of risk/safety within the home (hot pans, cooker top, boiling water etc.).</p>	<p>Child shows a developing understanding of friendships and interaction with others and will be able to name 'friends' within their nursery group.</p>	<p>Child is able to begin to recognise which foods and drinks are healthier and the importance of a healthy diet.</p> <p>Child has an understanding of the importance of self-care routines to maintain good health (washing hands, cleaning teeth, having a bath etc.).</p> <p>Child has a developing understanding that some substances are harmful to ingest or touch.</p> <p>Child has an understanding of basic feelings and emotions.</p>
<p>Child will have reached expected outcomes in relation to EYFS ELG (40-60 months) upon transition from Early Years to Reception, with reference to Prime Areas of Learning: literacy skills, Mathematics, Understanding of the world and Expressive Art and Design http://www.primaryresources.co.uk/foundation/docs/devmatters_tracking_2012.doc</p>			
<p>Provision: Please refer to detail provided within the Teaching and Learning Strategies and Curriculum/Interventions sections of the Early Years Thresholds Guidance: Cognition and Learning.</p>			