Universal Inclusive | Targeted | Targeted Plus | Specialist | Highly Specialist

Derbyshire Graduated Response Guidance document

Building on strengths and supporting needs.

October 2026 - Public

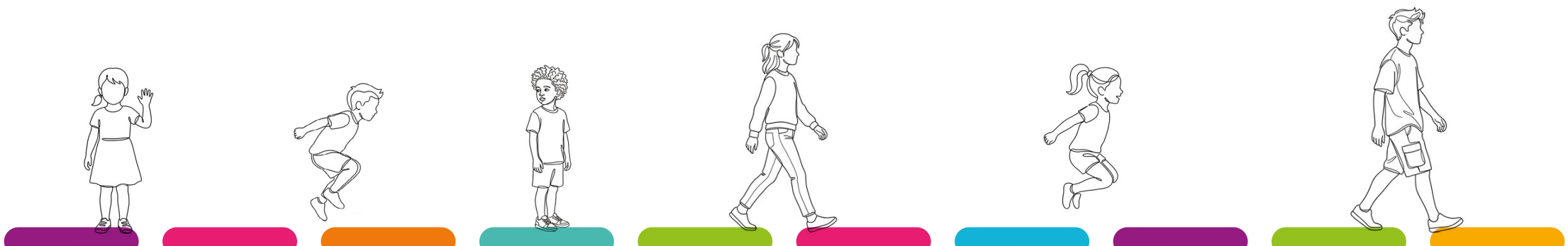


DERBYSHIRE County Council

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The five-level Graduated Response

This Graduated Response guidance sits alongside Derbyshire Stepping Stones, strengthening and building on good practice to ensure that all children and young people have access to high-quality, inclusive education within their local settings.

The Derbyshire Stepping Stones provide a clear visual representation of the graduated response, illustrating the continuum of provision available to children and young people as needs change. They demonstrate how support moves from universal inclusive practice, through targeted and specialist provision, to highly specialist support where required.

Central to the Derbyshire Stepping Stones is the Assess–Plan–Do–Review (APDR) cycle, which underpins effective identification, planning, delivery and evaluation of support. This cyclical process ensures that provision is responsive, evidence-based, and focused on improving outcomes for children and young people.

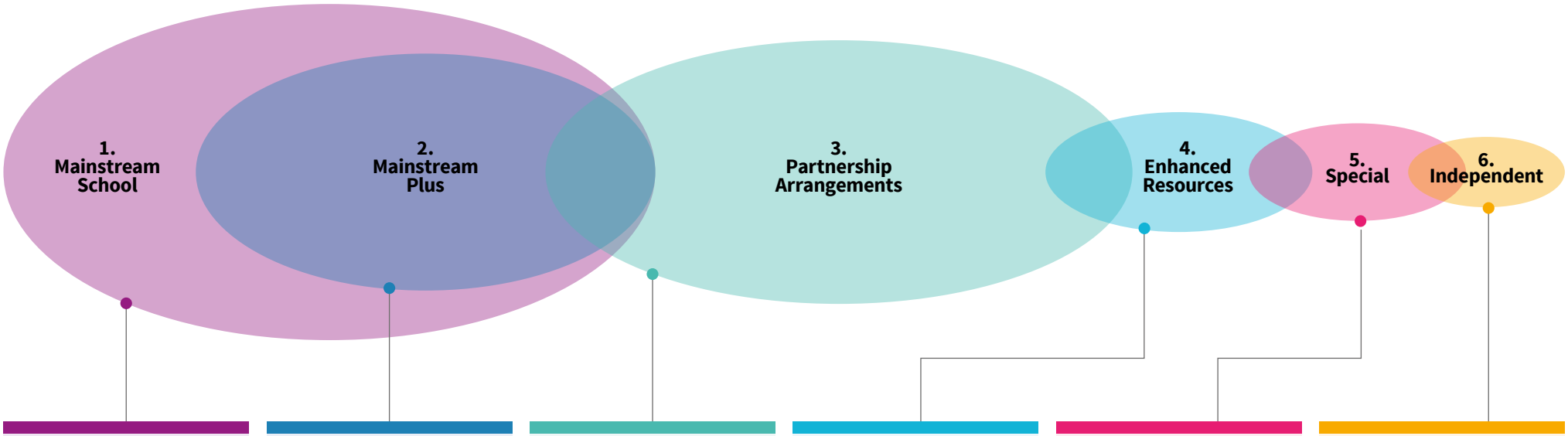
The levels describe provision and the type and intensity of support required; they do not label the child or young person.



Increasing personalisation, coordination and specialist involvement ▸▸▸

Universal Inclusive remains the foundation across all levels. Children do not have to move through every level in order.

Delivering a flexible continuum of provision



1. Mainstream School

The majority of children from 4 categories of SEND attend mainstream school with quality first teaching that identifies need and adapts curriculum.

2. Mainstream Plus

Some pupils require additional resources and arrangements within schools. Their needs are described in a SEN support plan.

3. Partnership Arrangements

Schools work in partnership to arrange collaborative provision, alternative curriculums and shared resources.

4. Enhanced Resources

Specialist provision located on mainstream school sites.

5. Special School Provision

Access to a variety of special school provision catering for the pupils with the most complex needs.

6. Independent non mainstream school

Access to a highly specialist learning and care environment for those pupils with highly exceptional or low incidence needs.

Assess, Plan, Do, Review

Assess

- Assess for need
- Identify the need
- Analyse the need
- Consider the provision required, alongside the CYP, their family and any other professionals involved



Plan

- Plan the intervention in line with the outcomes expected for the CYP
- Consult with the CYP, their family and any other professional involved
- Outline the outcomes to be expected, e.g. development or behaviour
- Set a clear date for review

Review

- Review the effectiveness of support and CYP's progress
- Evaluate the quality of impact and support
- Agree any changes to outcomes whilst considering any progress and development made
- Revisit this cycle of action with increasing detail and frequency

Do

- Implement the interventions or programmes
- Assess the CYP's response to the actions taken
- Problem solve as needed

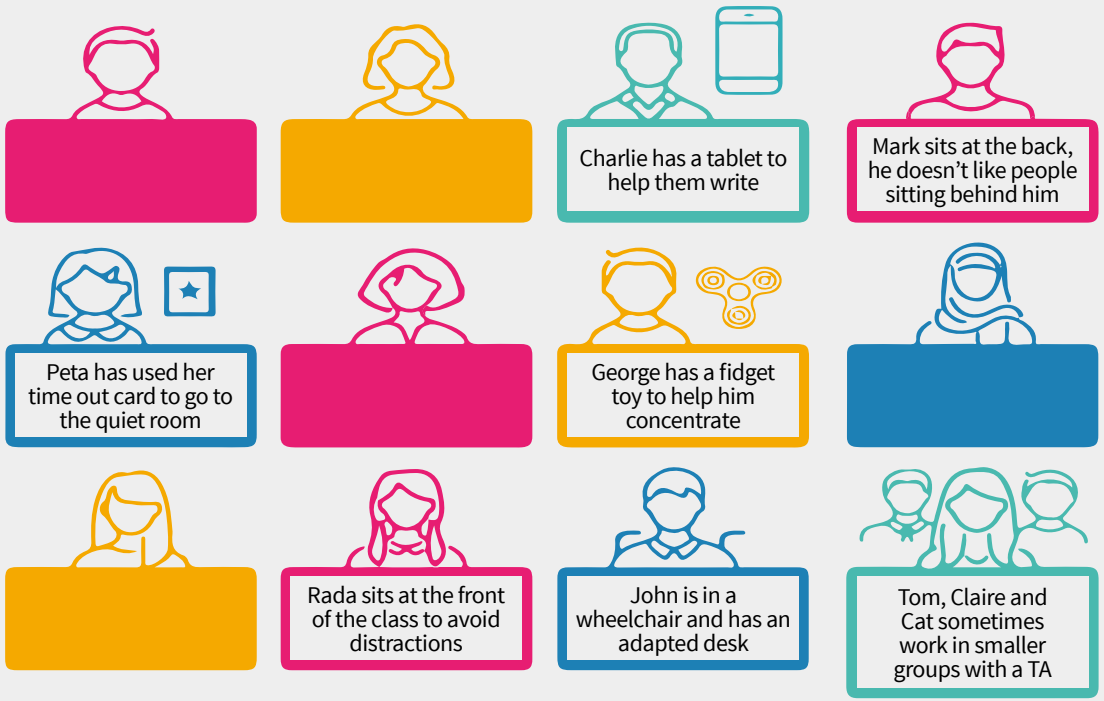
Co-production throughout: children, young people and families help identify strengths and barriers, agree outcomes, shape provision and review impact.

Ordinarily Available Provision and reasonable adjustments

The inclusive teaching, support, adaptations and resources schools provide as part of their usual provision to remove barriers to learning and participation. This will look different for different children, according to their strengths and needs.

Support is about making 'reasonable adjustments' to **remove barriers and ensure every child can access learning, participate and be included alongside their peers.** It can include having a safe place/quiet room where the child can go, or carefully choosing where the child sits in the classroom, extra help or specialist equipment, and may also include making financial commitments. Reasonable adjustments do not depend on a diagnosis, an EHC plan or additional funding.





Derbyshire Local Offer

The expectations of the Graduated Response are a key part of the Local Offer for learning. Links to resources can be found on the Derbyshire Local Offer website.

Universal Inclusive

For all children and young people

Who this is for

Inclusive practice and ordinarily available provision for every child and young person, across all aspects of school life.

Purpose

To create belonging, remove barriers early and provide a strong foundation for learning, participation, attendance, wellbeing and achievement.

What this looks like in practice

- Inclusive leadership, culture and high expectations
- Adaptive teaching and accessible curriculum
- Ordinarily Available Provision embedded in everyday practice
- Anticipated reasonable adjustments
- Relational, pastoral and attendance approaches
- Early identification and timely response

Planning, recording and review

- Teachers assess, adapt and review as part of everyday teaching
- Whole-school systems monitor learning, participation, attendance and wellbeing
- The SENCO supports leaders and staff strategically
- Children and families contribute to understanding strengths and emerging barriers

Resources and decision-making

Delivered through the school's ordinarily available staffing, resources and delegated funding. Reasonable adjustments do not depend on a diagnosis, EHC plan or additional funding.

Moving through the Derbyshire Graduated Response

Support is flexible. Where barriers persist or a child requires provision that is additional to or different from what is ordinarily available, the school begins a more focused APDR cycle at Targeted.

Co-production throughout: children, young people and families help identify strengths and barriers, agree outcomes, shape provision and review impact.

Derbyshire Graduated Response

- **Universal Inclusive**
- Targeted
- Targeted Plus
- Specialist
- Highly Specialist

The level describes the type and intensity of support required. It does not label the child or young person.

Targeted

Additional support through SEN Support

Who this is for

Children and young people with identified needs who require focused provision that is additional to or different from ordinarily available support.

Purpose

To reduce identified barriers and improve agreed, meaningful outcomes through timely adaptations or interventions that complement, rather than replace, high-quality teaching.

What this looks like in practice

- Focused, evidence-informed adaptations or interventions
- Small-group or individual support where appropriate
- Clear links between assessment, provision and outcomes
- Active SENCO involvement
- Increased partnership with the child, young person and family
- Continued access to inclusive classroom teaching

Planning, recording and review

- A co-produced SEN Support plan or equivalent record
- Clear baseline, outcomes, provision, responsibilities and review date
- Repeated Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycles
- Review impact, not simply whether support was delivered
- Adapt, continue or stop provision in response to evidence

Resources and decision-making

Schools use available resources flexibly to meet identified needs. Decisions about additional support, funding or assessment are based on evidence of need, provision and outcomes, not a fixed financial threshold. The class or subject teacher leads day-to-day provision and monitors progress, working with the SENCO and relevant professionals.

Moving through the Derbyshire Graduated Response

Support may reduce, continue or become more personalised. Targeted Plus provides more personalised or closely coordinated SEN Support, informed by detailed assessment and specialist advice where appropriate. An EHC needs assessment may be requested whenever the statutory test may be met.

Co-production throughout: children, young people and families help identify strengths and barriers, agree outcomes, shape provision and review impact.

Derbyshire Graduated Response

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Targeted Plus

More personalised SEN Support, with closer coordination and specialist advice where needed.

Targeted Plus is a Derbyshire descriptor within SEN Support, not a statutory category.

Who this is for

Children and young people who require more personalised or closely coordinated SEN Support, informed by detailed assessment and specialist advice where appropriate. This may include those whose barriers persist despite targeted support.

Purpose

To deepen understanding of strengths and needs, refine provision and improve outcomes through increasingly detailed assessment, closer coordination and relevant professional advice.

What this looks like in practice

- More personalised teaching, adaptations and interventions
- Detailed assessment of strengths, needs and barriers
- Relevant professional consultation or advice
- Bespoke strategies embedded across the school day
- Closer SENCO coordination and multi-agency liaison
- Continued participation in inclusive classroom practice

Planning, recording and review

- A co-produced, detailed SEN Support plan or equivalent record
- Clear outcomes, provision, responsibilities and review arrangements
- Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycles informed by detailed assessment, with review frequency agreed according to need
- Specialist advice translated into day-to-day practice
- Evidence of impact gathered across learning, participation, attendance and wellbeing

Resources and decision-making

Schools coordinate available resources and relevant professional advice around the agreed plan. Funding or assessment decisions remain based on individual evidence and statutory tests. The class or subject teacher leads day-to-day provision and monitors progress, working with the SENCO and relevant professionals.

Moving through the Derbyshire Graduated Response

Support may reduce, continue or become more specialist. Move towards Specialist when sustained specialist assessment, intervention or provision is needed. An EHC needs assessment may be requested at any stage where the statutory test may be met.

Co-production throughout: children, young people and families help identify strengths and barriers, agree outcomes, shape provision and review impact.

Derbyshire Graduated Response

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Building on strengths and supporting needs.

Specialist

Specialist assessment, intervention or provision

Who this is for

Children and young people who require sustained specialist expertise and coordinated planning because barriers are complex, persistent or significantly affect learning, participation or wellbeing.

Purpose

To secure effective, coordinated and individualised provision informed by specialist assessment and ongoing professional involvement.

What this looks like in practice

- Sustained input from relevant specialist professionals
- Coordinated education, health and care planning where appropriate
- Personalised teaching and curriculum access
- Specialist intervention, equipment or environmental adaptation
- Support for transitions and preparation for adulthood
- Capacity-building for staff around the child or young person

Planning, recording and review

- A co-produced, individualised plan with shared outcomes
- Specialist assessments and recommendations clearly reflected in provision
- Regular multi-agency review and coordinated responsibilities
- Detailed evidence of implementation, progress and impact
- Statutory review processes followed where an EHC plan is in place

Resources and decision-making

Specialist support may be delivered with or without an EHC plan, and in mainstream or specialist settings. Decisions about provision, placement, funding or assessment are made individually and are not determined by the level name.

Moving through the Derbyshire Graduated Response

Support may reduce, continue or become more intensive. Move towards Highly Specialist when provision must be sustained, highly individualised and coordinated across services. An EHC needs assessment may be requested at any stage where the statutory test may be met.

Co-production throughout: children, young people and families help identify strengths and barriers, agree outcomes, shape provision and review impact.

Derbyshire Graduated Response

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Highly Specialist

Intensive, highly individualised and coordinated provision

Who this is for

A very small number of children and young people who require intensive, sustained and highly individualised provision in response to significant, long-term and complex needs.

Purpose

To provide coordinated, specialist provision that enables participation, progress, independence and preparation for adulthood through a highly personalised pathway.

What this looks like in practice

- Sustained specialist teaching, intervention and provision
- Highly personalised curriculum and communication pathways
- Specialist equipment, approaches or environments where required
- Coordinated education, health and care contributions
- Intensive support for participation, independence and transitions
- Continued focus on strengths, aspirations and belonging

Planning, recording and review

- A co-produced, highly individualised plan with coordinated outcomes
- Clear responsibilities across education, health and care where appropriate
- Frequent review of provision, impact, risk and changing need
- Statutory processes followed where an EHC plan is in place
- Preparation for adulthood embedded from the earliest appropriate point

Resources and decision-making

Many, but not all, children receiving provision at this level will have an EHC plan. Where a plan is in place, the provision in Section F must be secured and the plan reviewed through statutory processes. The level does not determine placement or funding.

Moving through the Derbyshire Graduated Response

Provision remains responsive and should change when evidence shows that a different type or intensity of support is required. Children and young people do not have to move through every level in order, and support may increase, reduce or be differently coordinated over time.

Co-production throughout: children, young people and families help identify strengths and barriers, agree outcomes, shape provision and review impact.

Derbyshire Graduated Response

- Universal Inclusive
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The level describes the type and intensity of support required. It does not label the child or young person.

Statutory duties and EHC needs assessment

National guidance and assessment rightswithin the Derbyshire Graduated Response

KEY PRINCIPLE

The Graduated Response supports, but does not replace, statutory duties. Decisions follow individual needs and provision, rather than a level.

Statutory duties and guidance

Children and Families Act 2014: the statutory framework for SEN support, EHC needs assessments and plans.

SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years: guidance on inclusive practice, identifying and meeting needs, participation and joint working.

Equality Act 2010: duties towards disabled children and young people, including reasonable adjustments.

What Derbyshire's five levels mean

Universal Inclusive, Targeted, Targeted Plus, Specialist and Highly Specialist describe provision, not the child. These are not statutory categories. Targeted Plus sits within SEN Support. Levels do not determine assessment, plan, funding or placement rights.

National SEND reform

Every Child Achieving and Thriving and its SEND consultation set out reform proposals. The Government intends to legislate. Proposals must remain separate from current statutory requirements.

EHC needs assessment

Who can request: a child's parent, the young person, or someone acting for a school or post-16 institution. Assessment and issuing an EHC plan are separate decisions.

Section 36(8): the local authority must assess if it considers that the child or young person has or may have SEN, and that special educational provision through an EHC plan may be necessary.

School evidence: strengths and needs, support delivered and its impact, pupil and family views, review records and professional advice. Explain why an EHC plan may be necessary.

No requirement to complete every level or a fixed number of review cycles. The statutory test governs the decision. Continue appropriate support while the request is considered.

In addition, anyone else can bring a child or young person who has (or may have) SEN to the attention of the local authority, particularly where they think an EHC needs assessment may be necessary. This could include, for example, foster carers, health and social care professionals, early years practitioners, youth offending teams or probation services, those responsible for education in custody, school or college staff or a family friend. Directly after this sentence: Who can request: a child's parent, the young person, or someone acting for a school or post-16 institution.