Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy

(including alternative provision, early years and person-centred SEND support)

ABA Pathways

This policy is reviewed at least annually and sooner where there are statutory, regulatory, commissioning or operational changes.

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1. Aims

ABA Pathways is committed to providing high-quality, inclusive and person-centred support for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). We believe every child and young person should be supported to achieve meaningful outcomes, participate in decisions about their life and education, develop independence and enjoy a good quality of life.

- Place the child or young person and their family at the centre of planning and decision-making.
- Identify needs and barriers to learning, participation, communication, independence and wellbeing as early and accurately as possible.
- Provide individualised, evidence-informed support based on assessment, ongoing data and professional judgement.
- Promote inclusion, dignity, autonomy, communication, positive relationships and the least restrictive approach.
- Work collaboratively with families, commissioners, schools, local authorities, health, social care and other professionals.

- Ensure that children and young people with SEND are safeguarded and that changes in presentation are explored with professional curiosity rather than automatically attributed to disability.
- Support successful transitions and, where age appropriate, preparation for adulthood.

2. Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy has regard to the current legal and statutory framework in England, including:

- Children and Families Act 2014, including Part 3
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (statutory guidance)
- Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments
- Education Act 1996, including section 19 duties relating to suitable education
- Alternative Provision statutory guidance (as updated)
- Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, where applicable
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- Human Rights Act 1998 and UK data protection legislation, where applicable

Government SEND reform proposals and implementation programmes are monitored by ABA Pathways. Where proposals are not yet in force, they will inform service development but will not be treated as replacing existing statutory duties until legislation or statutory guidance changes.

3. Definitions

A child or young person has special educational needs (SEN) if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if they:

- Have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age; or
- Have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.

For children under compulsory school age, SEN includes circumstances where they are likely to fall within the definition above when they reach compulsory school age, or would do so if special educational provision were not made.

Special educational provision means educational or training provision that is additional to, or different from, that made generally for others of the same age. A disability is defined by the Equality Act 2010. A child or young person may be disabled without having SEN, and may have SEN without meeting the Equality Act definition of disability.

4. Our SEND provision and principles

ABA Pathways supports children and young people approximately 2 to 19 years of age whose needs may make access to mainstream or larger-group provision difficult. Many of the children and young

people we support are autistic and/or have communication, learning, sensory, behavioural, emotional, physical or health needs. Many have EHCPs, although an EHCP or formal diagnosis is not a prerequisite for all ABA Pathways services.

Our work may include early intervention, alternative education provision, direct educational placements, respite and community support, parent/carer support, behaviour support, training and consultancy. The exact status of a placement, commissioning arrangement and statutory responsibility will be clear for each child.

Our practice is guided by the following principles:

- Person-centred and strengths-based planning
- Presumption of competence and respect for neurodiversity
- Functional, meaningful and developmentally appropriate outcomes
- Assent, choice and communication access wherever possible
- Positive Behaviour Support (PBS), capable environments and proactive support
- Evidence-informed teaching, including behavioural and educational approaches where appropriate to the individual
- Generalisation and maintenance of useful skills across people, settings and routines
- Ongoing review of whether support remains necessary, proportionate and beneficial

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 Directors

- Ensure this policy is implemented across relevant ABA Pathways services.
- Ensure sufficient staffing, training, supervision, resources and governance arrangements are in place.
- Ensure SEND, safeguarding, equality, health and safety and commissioning responsibilities are considered together.
- Review service quality, complaints, incidents, restrictive practice and outcomes to identify improvements.

5.2 Consultants / programme supervisors

- Lead or oversee assessment, individual planning and review within their professional competence.
- Ensure programmes are based on identified need, meaningful outcomes and current information.
- Provide supervision, coaching and competency-based support to practitioners.
- Liaise with families, commissioners and the wider multidisciplinary team (MDT).
- Review data and other evidence and amend support when progress is limited, needs change or barriers emerge.

5.3 Tutors, practitioners and support staff

- Know the child or young person's current plans, communication methods, risks, reasonable adjustments and support strategies.
- Implement agreed support consistently and record information accurately.
- Seek support where a programme, strategy or risk is unclear or no longer effective.

- Listen to and respond to the child or young person's communication, including behaviour that may communicate distress, refusal, pain, fear or unmet need.
- Raise safeguarding concerns immediately in line with the safeguarding policy.

5.4 The child or young person and their parents/carers

Children, young people and their parents/carers are partners in the process. Their views, priorities, culture, communication preferences, lived experience and aspirations will inform assessment, target setting, review and transition planning.

6. Identification and assessment of needs

ABA Pathways will use proportionate assessment to understand strengths, needs and barriers. Assessment may include observation, direct assessment, curriculum or developmental measures, functional assessment, communication assessment, risk assessment, information from the family and existing professional reports.

Assessment will not rely on diagnosis alone. Staff will consider whether a change in learning, behaviour, communication, attendance, health, sleep, eating, continence, mood or engagement may indicate a new educational, medical, environmental or safeguarding need.

The four broad areas of need described in the SEND Code of Practice - communication and interaction; cognition and learning; social, emotional and mental health; and sensory and/or physical needs - may support planning, but ABA Pathways recognises that needs commonly overlap and the purpose of identification is to determine appropriate action rather than to fit a child into a category.

7. The graduated approach and individual planning

Where ABA Pathways is responsible for planning educational support, we use an assess-plan-do-review cycle, adapted to the child or young person and the commissioning arrangement.

- **Assess:** Gather information about strengths, needs, preferences, barriers, current performance, environmental factors and risks.
- **Plan:** Agree meaningful outcomes, reasonable adjustments, teaching/support strategies, responsibilities, measurement and review arrangements with the child/young person and family as appropriate.
- **Do:** Implement the agreed support with appropriate supervision, fidelity and opportunities for practice across relevant contexts.
- **Review:** Evaluate progress and wellbeing using data, observation, child/family feedback and professional information; identify what is working and amend or discontinue what is not.

Targets should be ambitious but realistic, functional and meaningful. Programmes will not continue solely because they have historically been used; the ongoing benefit to the child or young person must be evident.

8. Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

Where a child or young person has an EHCP, ABA Pathways will work within the scope of its role and commissioning agreement to support delivery of the specified provision and outcomes. The local authority retains its statutory responsibilities for securing provision in accordance with the Children and Families Act 2014.

- Relevant staff will have access to the parts of the EHCP and associated plans they need to implement support safely and effectively.
- Programmes and targets will be mapped to relevant EHCP outcomes where appropriate, while also responding to current assessed need.
- ABA Pathways will contribute evidence to annual reviews and other statutory reviews when requested and will identify where provision, outcomes or risk arrangements may need reconsideration.
- Any concern that required provision is not being delivered, is no longer suitable or cannot be delivered safely will be escalated to the appropriate commissioner/local authority and discussed with the family.

9. Curriculum, teaching and reasonable adjustments

Children and young people should have access to a broad, meaningful and appropriately ambitious educational experience. Curriculum content and teaching methods will be adapted to individual starting points, communication, sensory needs, motivation, developmental profile and intended outcomes.

- Break skills into teachable components where helpful while retaining a clear link to meaningful whole skills.
- Use prompting carefully and systematically, with plans to fade support and avoid unnecessary prompt dependence.
- Provide visual, environmental, sensory, communication and access adjustments.
- Use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) where required and ensure staff know how to support the individual's communication system.
- Plan for generalisation and maintenance across people, places, materials and routines.
- Make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 and review whether adjustments are effective.

10. Communication, behaviour and capable environments

ABA Pathways views behaviour in context. Behaviour that challenges may communicate pain, distress, sensory need, fear, uncertainty, a wish to stop, lack of understanding, limited access to communication, environmental mismatch or other unmet need. Staff must avoid assumptions and seek to understand function and context.

- Prioritise proactive, preventative and least restrictive strategies.

- Teach functional communication, coping, independence and replacement skills where appropriate.
- Develop capable environments that increase predictability, communication access, meaningful activity, choice, positive relationships and quality of life.
- Use behaviour support plans when indicated, based on assessment and reviewed using data and stakeholder feedback.
- Treat restrictive physical intervention as a safety intervention of last resort, never as a teaching method or punishment, and follow ABA Pathways' relevant behaviour support, restrictive intervention and safeguarding procedures.
- Consider whether a new or escalating behaviour may be a safeguarding or medical indicator and escalate appropriately.

11. Alternative provision and commissioning

Where ABA Pathways provides alternative provision (AP), we will work with the commissioning school and/or local authority to ensure the placement has clear objectives, is suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude, SEND and health needs, and is delivered in a safe environment.

- The commissioner retains the statutory responsibilities that apply to it; commissioning AP does not remove safeguarding, SEND, attendance or educational oversight duties.
- Before placement, relevant information should be shared, including SEND/EHCP information, safeguarding information, attendance history, medical needs, risk assessments, communication needs and current plans.
- The intended purpose, hours, curriculum/provision, outcomes, review arrangements, attendance reporting and communication routes will be clear.
- ABA Pathways will promptly notify the commissioner of safeguarding concerns, significant attendance issues, material changes in need, incidents or concerns about suitability.
- Placements will be reviewed regularly and should not become an unreviewed long-term arrangement by default.
- Where a child has an EHCP, commissioning and review must take account of the provision specified in the plan.

12. Early years SEND

For children in the early years, ABA Pathways will promote early identification and timely support while recognising that development is variable and a diagnosis is not required before needs can be supported. Where the Early Years Foundation Stage applies, relevant statutory requirements will be followed.

- Work closely with parents/carers and relevant early years, health and local authority professionals.
- Use developmentally appropriate assessment and play-based opportunities alongside structured teaching where beneficial.
- Prioritise communication, engagement, play, independence, social participation, self-advocacy and access to everyday routines.

- Support transition into school or other provision through planned information sharing, visits, modelling/coaching and clear descriptions of successful adjustments and support.

13. Preparing for adulthood and transitions

Transition planning will be proportionate to age and need and will begin early enough to reduce avoidable disruption. For older young people, planning will increasingly focus on preparation for adulthood, including employment or meaningful occupation, independent living, community participation, relationships, health, self-advocacy and decision-making.

Transitions between staff, rooms, services, schools, placements or life stages will include timely information sharing and opportunities to familiarise the child or young person with new people, environments and expectations.

14. Working with parents, carers, children and young people

- Provide accessible opportunities for children and young people to express views using their preferred communication methods.
- Seek assent and honour refusal or requests for breaks wherever it is safe and practicable to do so.
- Agree priorities collaboratively with families and explain the rationale for support clearly.
- Share progress information and concerns in a timely way and provide planned review opportunities.
- Avoid jargon or explain it when technical terminology is necessary.
- Respect that family and professional views may differ and use transparent review and complaints processes to resolve concerns.

15. Multi-agency working

ABA Pathways recognises that effective SEND support frequently depends on coordinated education, health and care input. With appropriate information sharing and consent where required, we will liaise with relevant professionals such as local authority teams, schools, educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, paediatric/medical services, social workers, CAMHS and other specialist services.

Advice from other professionals will be incorporated where relevant and within professional competence. Where recommendations conflict, are unclear or appear incompatible with safety or the child's current needs, this will be discussed rather than silently disregarded.

16. Safeguarding, attendance and children with medical needs

Children with SEND can face additional safeguarding barriers, including communication difficulties, dependency on adults, intimate care, social isolation and the risk that signs of abuse are attributed to disability. ABA Pathways staff must follow the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and maintain professional curiosity.

- A child does not need to communicate a safeguarding concern verbally for staff to act. Changes in behaviour, communication or presentation may be significant.
- Attendance or engagement concerns will be shared with the commissioner and/or family in accordance with the placement arrangement, and repeated or prolonged absence will be considered in a safeguarding context.
- Medical conditions, pain, medication effects and healthcare needs will be considered when assessing learning or behaviour. Staff will follow individual healthcare and emergency plans where applicable.
- Personal and intimate care will preserve dignity and follow agreed plans, safeguarding procedures and staff boundaries.

17. Staff training, supervision and professional standards

All staff will receive induction and ongoing training appropriate to their role. Training may include autism and neurodiversity, communication/AAC, safeguarding, behaviour support/PBS, data collection, teaching procedures, health and safety, first aid, restrictive intervention and other child-specific competencies.

Consultants and practitioners will work within the scope of their current competence, professional registration and role. ABA Pathways will provide supervision and coaching proportionate to responsibility and need.

ABA Pathways recognises current UK professional registration arrangements. References to qualifications or credentials in public-facing or internal documents will be kept current; historic requirements that are no longer available internationally will not be presented as current mandatory credentials.

18. Complaints and resolving concerns

Parents/carers, children and young people, commissioners and professionals are encouraged to raise concerns early. Where a concern cannot be resolved through routine discussion, ABA Pathways' Complaints Policy will apply. Complaints relating to a statutory EHCP decision, local authority duty or school decision may also need to be directed to the responsible body and its statutory complaints or appeal route.

No person will be disadvantaged for raising a concern in good faith. Safeguarding allegations or concerns about adults will be managed under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy rather than through an ordinary service complaint alone.

19. Information, records and confidentiality

- Maintain clear records of assessment, plans, reviews, progress, incidents and significant decisions appropriate to the service.
- Record the rationale for material changes to programmes or support.
- Share information on a need-to-know basis in accordance with safeguarding duties and UK data protection law.

- Transfer relevant information securely when a child changes provision, in accordance with safeguarding, commissioning and statutory requirements.
- Ensure families understand how progress and support information is recorded and shared where appropriate.

20. Quality assurance and monitoring

ABA Pathways will maintain systems to monitor implementation of this policy and the quality of SEND provision. Quality assurance will consider not only whether procedures are followed, but whether support is producing meaningful outcomes and remains safe, respectful and proportionate.

- Programme and case supervision
- Review of progress and outcome data
- Observation of practice and competency checks
- Feedback from children, young people, families, staff, commissioners and professionals
- Review of incidents, safeguarding themes, restrictive interventions and complaints
- Audits of records, EHCP/provision alignment and training
- Action plans where weaknesses or gaps are identified

The directors will ensure action is taken promptly to remedy identified weaknesses. This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner following significant changes to legislation, statutory guidance, service delivery or identified learning.

21. Links with other policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Support / Behaviour Policy
- Restrictive Physical Intervention / Restraint Policy
- Equality Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Attendance procedures
- Health and Safety Policy
- First Aid and Medication procedures
- Data Protection / Confidentiality procedures
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Safer Recruitment procedures
- Online Safety / Acceptable Use procedures

Appendix 1: The four broad areas of SEND

- **Communication and interaction:** May include differences in speech, language, social communication and interaction, including autistic communication profiles.
- **Cognition and learning:** May include general or specific learning difficulties and differences in the rate or way a child learns.
- **Social, emotional and mental health:** May include emotional regulation, anxiety, trauma-related presentation, attention, relationships or other needs affecting participation and learning.
- **Sensory and/or physical needs:** May include visual or hearing impairment, physical disability, sensory processing differences or medical/physical access needs.

These areas are not diagnoses and should not be used to limit expectations. A child or young person may have needs across more than one area and these may change over time.

Appendix 2: ABA Pathways SEND support cycle

- **1. Understand:** Listen to the child/young person and family; gather current information, assess strengths, needs, barriers and risks.
- **2. Agree priorities:** Identify meaningful outcomes and what matters now and in the future.
- **3. Plan support:** Agree teaching, environmental adjustments, communication supports, staffing, risk controls and how progress will be measured.
- **4. Implement:** Deliver support consistently with appropriate supervision, dignity, choice and opportunities for independence.
- **5. Review:** Examine progress, wellbeing, generalisation, family/child feedback, incidents and barriers.
- **6. Adapt:** Continue what is effective; modify, fade or stop what is not; escalate where needs or statutory provision require wider review.