

Specialist Status in SEND (SSSEND)

Competency framework

This framework forms the basis of the Specialist Status in SEND (SSSEND). It describes **competencies** that those working in the Further Education (FE) and skills sector can demonstrate to positively impact SEND and inclusion outcomes for themselves, their learners, their organisation and the wider sector.

Specialist statuses validate the current expert knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) of those working within educational settings in the FE and Skills sector. They ensure and sustain impact and influence on professionals, on learners and within organisations.

Specialist statuses are underpinned by the Professional Standards, and the Specialist Status in SEND specifically links to **PS11. Develop and apply your knowledge of special educational needs and disabilities to create inclusive learning experiences.**

The competencies take account of the direction of SEND reform in England set out in the Schools White Paper, Every Child Achieving and Thriving (February 2026), and the associated SEND reform consultation. They will be reviewed and mapped against the National Inclusion Standards and revised SEND Code of Practice as these are published.

Nothing in this framework changes what the law currently requires. Applicants must evidence practice under the legal framework in force at the time of application, including the Equality Act 2010 duty to make reasonable adjustments, the SEND Code of Practice and existing EHCP arrangements. Where proposed reforms are referenced, they describe the direction of travel that practice should anticipate; they do not replace current duties.

The Specialist Status in SEND has been created to recognise SEND and inclusive practice in any role in the FE and Skills sector: from professional and business support staff, teachers and educators to leaders. This reflects the expectation that inclusion is the responsibility of every member of staff, not only specialists. How you demonstrate the competencies will depend on your context, role and organisation.

To illustrate different ways different people could practise and demonstrate the competencies, we have provided examples of what each might entail and what this could look like. The following list is not exhaustive. Instead, it illustrates what SEND competencies are and the breadth of ways in which SEND can be delivered. If you contribute to SEND differently because of your role and context, that is absolutely fine. We will just ask you to outline how you demonstrate each competency as part of the specialist status process.

All applicants, whatever their role, are expected to meet a common evidence threshold: informed judgement, applied expertise, demonstrable impact on learners or on the practice of others, and the ability to improve practice beyond their own, proportionate to their role and context. Evidence of participation alone — attendance at training, membership of a network, or awareness of policy — will not in itself meet the standard for a specialist status

The nine competency descriptors are:

1. I have a strong **awareness of my SEND responsibilities, values, and behaviours** and apply these within my educational context, including my part in a whole-organisation approach to inclusion.
2. I promote **learner voice**, confidence, advocacy, and independence through inclusive communication and adaptive practice, working in partnership with parents and carers where appropriate and with the learner's involvement and consent.
3. I embed **inclusive values, behaviours and evidence-informed adaptive practice**, identifying needs early and responding through proportionate assess, plan, do and review approaches. I know when and how to refer or escalate concerns, including through Individual Support Plans as these are introduced.
4. I support personalised learner **progression**, recognise all forms of **achievements** and enable long-term life opportunities, including well-planned transitions into, through and beyond FE into employment, further learning and adult life.
5. I regularly develop and **share up-to-date SEND-related expertise** relevant to my role, including current SEND legislation and guidance, while keeping abreast of emerging reform and the developing National Inclusion Standards.
6. I build and maintain **relationships, partnerships and networks**, including with education, health, care and specialist services and, where available, professionals contributing through local Experts at Hand arrangements, that impact organisational practices or systems.
7. I **engage with communities and the sector** to advocate for inclusive change and positive learner impact.
8. I use **feedback, evaluation and learner outcome data** to understand and improve the impact of my SEND practice.
9. I reflect on my practice and actively pursue **ongoing professional development** related to SEND.

Competency	This might entail	Examples of this in practice could include a(n)...
1. I have a strong awareness of my SEND responsibilities, values, and behaviours and apply these within my educational context, including my part in a whole-organisation approach to inclusion.	• Understanding your role in supporting SEND learners • Reflecting on your values and behaviours • Recognising how your actions impact inclusion • Being aware of your own strengths and areas for development in SEND practice • Understanding current graduated arrangements and the proposed Universal, Targeted, Targeted Plus and Specialist layers of support	• Lecturer reflecting on how their teaching style supports neurodiverse learners • Support staff attending training on inclusive communication • Manager reviewing team practices to align with SEND values • HR representative setting up appraisal systems where staff can set inclusive SEND objectives • Governor challenging the organisation's inclusion strategy and use of inclusion funding
2. I promote learner voice , confidence, advocacy, and independence through inclusive communication and adaptive practice, working in partnership with parents and carers where appropriate and with the learner's involvement and consent.	• Creating opportunities for learners to express themselves • Adapting communication methods to meet diverse needs • Promoting learner autonomy and self-advocacy • Ensuring feedback is gathered and acted upon • Setting up Learner Voice sessions with total communication options - voice, gesture, symbols, choices, etc. • Universal Design for Learning that allows for a range of ways of expressing learning. • Involving learners and, where appropriate, their families in setting and reviewing support goals, including through proposed Individual Support Plan arrangements as these are introduced. • Ensuring learning platforms, documents, assessments and physical environments are accessible	• Tutor using visual aids and assistive tech to support communication • Administrator adapting forms and processes for accessibility • Curriculum lead embedding learner voice in programme design • Student Union president/representative actively conducting surveys and gathering learner voice - being an advocate for SEND learners • Marketing officer engaging with SEND learners to adapt websites and media to be more inclusive and accessible • Personal tutor co-producing and reviewing support goals with the learner and, where appropriate, their parent or carer
3. I embed inclusive values, behaviours and evidence-informed adaptive practice , identifying needs early and responding through proportionate assess, plan, do and review approaches. I know when and how to refer or escalate concerns, including through Individual Support Plans as these are introduced.	• Promoting inclusive values in curriculum and delivery • Recognising and responding to diverse learner identities • Embedding lived experiences into teaching and support practices ensuring programme aims reflect inclusive principles • Challenging bias and promoting equity in learning environments • Using evidence-informed adaptive teaching so that commonly occurring needs are met in everyday practice • Responding to identified barriers and needs without waiting for a diagnosis or an EHCP, while recognising when specialist assessment or advice is required • Applying the assess, plan, do, review cycle consistently, and using agreed identification tools	• Tutor designing lesson plans that reflect cultural and neurodiverse perspectives • Programme coordinator reviewing curriculum to ensure alignment with inclusive values • Support worker adapting approaches based on learners' lived experiences • Manager leading team discussions on intersectionality and inclusive behaviours • Vocational tutor adapting workshop tasks so learners with SEND succeed without separate provision • Tutor who identifies a barrier, agrees adjustments with the learner, records and implements them, reviews whether they worked and seeks specialist advice where they did not • Learning support assistant raising an emerging concern through agreed

Competency	This might entail	Examples of this in practice could include a(n)...
	Knowing when and how to refer or escalate a concern, and to whom	processes rather than waiting for a diagnosis.
4. I support personalised learner progression, recognise all forms of achievements and enable long-term life opportunities, including well-planned transitions into, through and beyond FE into employment, further learning and adult life.	- Tracking and celebrating small steps of progress - Linking learning to future goals and life chances - Supporting both educational and personal development - Recognising the role of all staff in learner progression - Tracking progression data - Planning transitions with schools, local authorities and employers well before a learner moves on - Supporting independent living, choice and control - Planning transition to adult health and social care services where relevant - Supporting relationships, community participation and belonging - Working towards sustained destinations and reducing the risk of disengagement or becoming NEET	- Business manager aligning resources to support SEND learner pathways - Tutor using personalised learning plans - Teacher measuring incremental achievements, designing trackers for progress over time, not just the end qualification. - Careers advisor helping learners explore realistic and aspirational destinations - HR Manager showing that they have worked with curriculum and support teams to ensure recruitment, staffing, and training reflect learners' needs (eg employment coaches, SEND specialists) and that robust safer recruitment and DBS processes for staff working with vulnerable learners have been followed. - Data Manager creating new data dashboards to support colleagues in recognising trends in learner progress and outcomes. - Transition coordinator starting planning with feeder schools a year ahead of enrolment - Job coach supporting a learner's move into sustained employment or a supported internship - Tutor supporting a learner to travel independently and manage their own appointments ahead of leaving
5. I regularly develop and share up-to-date SEND-related expertise relevant to my role, including current SEND legislation and guidance, while keeping abreast of emerging reform and the developing National Inclusion Standards.	- Keeping up to date with SEND legislation and guidance, including the SEND reform programme and the developing National Inclusion Standards - Applying current statutory duties to practice, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 - Influencing change within your organisation and beyond - Advocating for SEND priorities in strategic planning - Attending update training provided by the organisation. - Familiarity with the proposed areas of development — executive function, motor and physical development, sensory development, speech, language and communication, and social and emotional development — recognising that these remain proposals rather than current categories	- Lecturer designing activities that reflect diverse learner backgrounds - Team leader facilitating discussions on inclusion and bias - Support worker adapting support strategies based on learner feedback - Senior leader embedding SEND priorities in strategic documents - Practitioner contributing to sector consultations - Coordinator aligning provision with current learner support arrangements and EHCPs, while preparing for proposed Individual Support Plans - HR or manager ensuring legislative updates are available and provided.
6. I build and maintain relationships, partnerships and networks, including with education, health, care and	- Building relationships with SEND stakeholders - Sharing best practice across networks	SEND lead working with local authorities to improve transition planning

Competency	This might entail	Examples of this in practice could include a(n)...
specialist services and, where available, professionals contributing through local Experts at Hand arrangements, that impact organisational practices or systems.	• Co-developing inclusive initiatives • Sustaining partnerships that support SEND learners • Joining professional networks e.g. NATSPEC, AoC, NASEN, etc. • Working with professionals contributing through local Experts at Hand arrangements, where available, and other health and care partners to plan and review support • Accessing specialist advice, applying it within my own role, and evaluating whether it made a difference for the learner	• Employer engagement officer creating supported internships • Tutor collaborating with parents/carers to support learner needs • Estates team leader or operative seeking student voice minutes, notes or attend student voice forums and listen to the views of students to address any issues • Advanced Practitioner launching a 'SEND-specific' teaching and learning group to identify, develop and disseminate practices across the organisation • Learning support manager coordinating speech and language therapy input through Experts at Hand
7. I engage with communities and the sector to advocate for inclusive change and positive learner impact.	• Understanding what 'community' means in your context • Advocating for SEND inclusion locally and sector-wide • Sharing successful strategies to inspire change • Participating in networks and forums • Contributing to local partnership arrangements for SEND and inclusion	• Community liaison officer working with local SEND groups • Assessor contributing to national SEND working groups • Leader promoting inclusive practices at sector events • Enrichment officer launching a community network of local employment opportunities and group work-placements for SEND learners. • Teacher creating community-based projects raising community confidence for learners (and awareness in the community); • Different professionals volunteering to community activities or projects; helping in local care settings.
8. I use feedback, evaluation and learner outcome data to understand and improve the impact of my SEND practice.	• Gathering and analysing feedback about my work from learners, staff, and stakeholders • Using qualitative and quantitative data to assess my impact on SEND outcomes, including attendance, progression and destinations • Reflecting on the effectiveness of inclusive strategies • Linking evaluation of my work for continuous improvement and strategic planning • Showing what changed as a result of evaluation — in learner experience, participation and sustained outcomes — not only that feedback or data were gathered	• Tutor analysing learner/stakeholder feedback to refine inclusive teaching methods • SEND coordinator conducting surveys to assess support effectiveness • Manager using feedback on own work to inform staff training priorities • Manager setting up stakeholder feedback opportunities and actively responding to make changes • Team leader presenting SEND impact findings in annual reports • Support staff reviewing own practice after learner feedback • Quality lead using learner support-plan review outcomes to evaluate the impact of support
9. I reflect on my practice and actively pursue ongoing professional development related to SEND.	• Engaging in CPD focused on SEND • Reflecting on practice to improve outcomes • Sharing learning with others • Using feedback to guide development (also applicable to #8 above)	• Professional maintaining a reflection log as part of appraisal/annual performance review. • Tutor attending training on autism strategies • Manager engaging in peer learning sets on SEND

Competency	This might entail	Examples of this in practice could include a(n)...
	Completing nationally funded SEND and inclusion training and applying it in practice	- Work experience officer engaging in CPD to understand SEND in the workplace and how they might better support learners and employers with their placement to make them as successful as possible. - Leader and manager reading policy updates and cascading information through leadership levels within their organisation - Catering manager engaging in training and disseminating that training to their assistants to provide a more understanding and inclusive service in college facilities. - Teacher summarising independent research and implementation of ideas/strategies in their work for a mid-year review and/or appraisal

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