



Hypothetical profiles of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

This document contains outline profiles of the needs of five hypothetical children and young people, developed by Isos Partnership for the purpose of fieldwork discussions with local authorities and others, as part of research commissioned by the Department for Education. The table below summarises these.

Young person	Description of their needs	Year group
Johnny	Medical/physical needs, no learning difficulty	Year 8
Kate	Moderate learning difficulty	Year 7
Peter	Autism, severe learning difficulty, and challenging behaviour	Year 5
Grace	Asperger syndrome, mental health difficulties, academically able	Year 12
Indy	Language/communication delay, some learning difficulties	Year 2

Profile 1 – Johnny: medical/physical needs, no learning difficulty

Johnny attends a local secondary school. He is now in year 8. Johnny has always been very excited about his transition to secondary school, especially since he found out that he would be able to join his friends there.

In primary school Johnny was a very keen reader, he enjoyed both science and maths. Johnny left primary school with levels 4 across all areas of the curriculum. Since then he continued to make good progress. He is also becoming much more independent about managing his physical and medical needs.

- Johnny is able to walk 10 metres but only with aids. This means that he is spending a significant part of his day in a wheelchair.
- He is not able to negotiate steps and stairs.
- He can be unstable when sitting down therefore needs special sitting arrangements (which has to be regularly reviewed), Johnny is able to reposition himself once seated.
- His physical needs can impact on managing his personal care, especially toileting.
- His fine motor skills have greatly improved and he no longer requires much help with cutting his food but writing is still a challenge.
- Johnny's diabetes is becoming unstable again, hence it needs to be monitored regularly during the day.

- At times Johnny gets very tired which means that he might have to be withdrawn from lessons to enable him to rest.

Johnny has a lot of friends. He enjoys singing and is a member of the school choir.

Profile 2 – Kate: moderate learning difficulty

Kate started secondary school 6 months ago. She is a very happy and friendly girl but has a history of making very slow progress, especially in literacy. This is now having a significant impact on other subjects.

Kate has a very positive attitude to learning and likes to 'have a go'. Despite not living locally and therefore not knowing many children, she has already managed to make lots of friends.

Kate is becoming more aware of her difficulties and sometimes is feeling very frustrated and upset about them.

- Kate has some functional literacy skills but they are not sufficiently secure therefore she finds it difficult to transfer them to other subjects.
- She writes in sentences but her writing is not always legible. Kate finds it difficult to use capital letters and punctuation appropriately.
- Kate is not always able to develop her ideas in writing in a clear and logical way.
- Kate still finds reading difficult. She often struggles to decode unfamiliar words and quickly uses guessing as her main strategy. This has recently impacted on her confidence in subjects such as history and geography. Kate will often sit passively if unsure. Her parents are very concerned that this will result in the gap in her rate of progress widening.
- Kate feels more confident about maths but still lacks consistency, for example when using a clock.
- Kate can use simple multiplications (up to 20) but finds it difficult to transfer this skill to problem solving tasks.

Profile 3 – Peter: autism, severe learning difficulty, and challenging behaviour

Peter has moved with his family many times over the last few years. This meant different schools, different teachers and support staff. When he was three Peter was diagnosed with autism and global developmental delay.

Peter is now approaching year 5, he is growing bigger and stronger. He does not live too far away from school, which means that mornings are not too difficult for him and his family.

Peter has a range of very complex needs in the area of learning and social communication and interaction.

- He has very limited understanding of language and very limited expressive communication.
- He has severe learning difficulties and working at low P levels across all areas of the curriculum.

- Peter is often (some weeks daily) involved in incidents which may require physical intervention.
- He displays persistently anxious and unpredictable behaviour.
- He is not able to develop appropriate relationships with other children and often prefers to be with adults.
- He is not able to recognise social, environmental or physical risks.
- Peter finds it difficult to deal with change; he often shows signs of distress, which can lead to sudden outbursts of challenging behaviour.

When Peter is at home some of these difficulties do not appear to be as challenging as at school but his parents are concerned that as Peter is getting older they are likely to impact more on their day to day life.

Profile 4 – Grace: Asperger syndrome, mental health difficulties, academically able

Grace is a very ambitious young woman now in her first year of studying for A levels. Her academic achievements have been greatly celebrated by her previous school and her parents – 12 GCSE grades As and As* across the board! Grace would like to go to university and become a doctor. She is particularly interested in developing new treatments for rare diseases.

Despite her outstanding academic achievements, Grace does not describe herself as a very happy young person. In the past she found it very difficult to make friends and could not understand why other children did not want to play with her or invite her to parties. As she was getting older some of the disagreements with other children often ended up in violent incidents, which had to be managed by staff. As a result, she was often described by others as a “loner”. Over time some of her difficulties became much more significant. In the last year she had to be hospitalised for developing an eating disorder. She has also begun to display self-harming behaviour. About two years ago Grace received a diagnosis of Asperger syndrome. Her family has been very supportive and tried to help with other difficulties such as:

- being able to organise herself;
- remembering appointments; and
- routine for personal care and keeping healthy.

Grace has great aspirations for the future but her family worries about how her fragile state of mind can deal with independent and adult life.

Profile 5 – Indy: Language / communication delay, some learning difficulties

Indy is a little boy who loves sport and outdoor activities. He is very active and popular with other boys. Indy recently started year 2.

At school Indy often finds it difficult to access learning. This is because he has some difficulties related to the development of his language and communication skills.

- Indy is able to listen and concentrate but only for a short period of time (10 min).
- He can follow simple instructions; long sentences are difficult therefore sometimes he finds it impossible to follow more complex conversations.
- Indy finds it challenging to remember words, especially when learning new vocabulary that is topic specific. Even when he learns new words he has to practice them regularly because he finds it difficult to retain new information.
- Indy finds it difficult to understand more complex concepts such as time or space.
- Indy has some difficulties expressing himself; his speech is not always very clear. His sentences can get very mixed up especially when it comes to using more complex grammatical structures such as tenses.
- Due to some of these difficulties he is developing low self-esteem.

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