

How schools are using the Sheffield Support Grid to meet needs

What is the grid?

The grid is a set of tables which provides information about teaching & learning strategies which might be expected to be in place when a child has Special Educational Needs or Disabilities. It also suggests services to go to for advice and support. The grid is organised around recognised areas of SEND. It organises the information provided into 5 levels. Level 1 is for children and Young People whose needs can be met with simple adjustments to support ordinarily available in school. Level 5 describes the support children/young people with the most complex needs might require. Children/Young People can be at more than one level for different areas of SEND.

At present a school aged grid has been introduced to schools.

Parallel grids are being developed for children in the early years (0- 5 years) and those in post 16 phase (16 to 25 years).

What does the Sheffield Support grid Offer?

The grid aims:

- To provide greater consistency in the support and resources provided for children/young people with similar needs. Locality SENCOs moderate decisions across the city twice a year.
- To offer a common language for describing needs
- To support the writing of robust MyPlans (a tool)
- To provide a framework for decisions about resourcing and meeting needs.

How does it work?

School are using the SSG when planning and reviewing children's progress. It is part of the conversation about what support is needed and what might be provided to meet unmet needs. Parents and children/young people should be involved in this conversation and know how the grid is being used.

Provision and Need

There has been much debate about whether existing provision or a judgement of the underlying needs of a child/ young person should be used to decide what grid level is relevant for a child/young person. This is a complex issue.

It is important to remember that the primary aim of the grid is to support improvements in inclusion and better practice in providing support – leading to better outcomes and greater independence.

In using the grid, schools are looking at a child/young person and considering what package of provision they need. However, while one Locality may say, for example, they need a level 3 package of provision other localities may say, “No, we’d all deliver a level 2 package of provision for a child with those levels of need”. Part of the role of the Sheffield Support Grid is to promote this kind of supportive challenge.

Clearly over time support needs will change and the grid level should reflect this. Also as schools develop their general support for SEND, the aspiration is that children/young people will tend to have their needs met at a lower level by better quality support.

Further development of the Sheffield Support Grid

Where the grid is being used as a framework for decision making there is a need for a clear process regarding how evidence of provision and need contribute to a judgement. There has to be consistency in this if there is to be equity across the city and everyone has confidence about use of the grid for resource allocation.

A recent moderation group looked at how grid judgements are being made by schools. The particular focus was on times when judgements are used as a measure of levels of need in each Locality. The session identified the strong commitments all local areas have put into using the grid. There was a reasonable level of agreement across the city about where similar children might be placed on the grid. It concluded, however, that clearer revised guidance needs to be developed which clarifies the process for making grid judgements.

This will happen by the end of June 2016. Guidance will be distributed via locality SENCOs and the Inclusion Programme bulletin.