

One Hounslow Banded Funding Model:

User Guide for the ‘Descriptor of Needs’ matrix

Purpose

This guide provides step-by-step instructions for parents/carers, education, health and social care professionals when completing a ‘Descriptor of Needs’ matrix as part of an Education, Health and Care Plan needs assessment, or as part of the Annual Review of the child’s or young person’s EHC Plan.

Hounslow’s allocation of Top Up Funding to settings, has been reviewed. In response to the review, a new and enhanced banding system has been co-produced to enable a clear, transparent and consistent funding framework, which will facilitate a more equitable, fair and robust decision-making process and funding allocation.

The new funding model will support inclusion for all children and young people (CYP) with an EHC Plan, by providing an appropriate level of funding to support the special education provision they require for their inclusion in their local community setting or school. Funding will follow the learner, regardless of the type of setting they attend, i.e. mainstream, Resource Pathway or Specialist setting.

All CYP with an EHC Plan, will have a ‘Descriptor of Needs’ matrix completed and kept up to date to reflect their current levels of need. Funding will be allocated to be used by their setting, to meet the CYP’s needs, through providing additional resources and building capacity and expertise.

1. What is the ‘Descriptor of Needs’ matrix?

The ‘Descriptor of Needs’ matrix, is a structured profiling tool designed to:

- Identify a CYP’s specific needs, within the 4 broad areas of need: Cognition and Learning needs; Communication and Interaction needs; Sensory and Physical needs; Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.
- Promote co-production with young people and parent carers and multi-agency collaboration .
- Guide decision-making around support, provision, and resources required to meet needs.
- Monitor progress and changes in needs over time.

2. When to Use the ‘Descriptor of Need’ matrix

Use the ‘Descriptor of Need’ matrix:

- a) As part of the Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment process
 - b) As part of the Annual Review process for CYP in Years 5 and 9
- a) As part of the Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment process

An Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment is the first step in the process of getting an EHC Plan. The needs assessment involves a variety of professionals assessing the CYP’s Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). As part of this assessment, in addition to drafting a report, each of the

professionals, will complete where the CYP's needs fit within the 'Descriptor of Needs' matrix for their area of specialism. For example, the Speech and Language Therapist will highlight the best fit descriptor of the CYP's Speech, Language and Communication needs, or the Teacher of the Deaf will highlight the best fit descriptor of the CYP's Deaf/Hearing loss. Parents/carers and the CYP's current educational setting will also collaborate to complete where the CYP's needs fit within the 'Descriptor of Needs' matrix.

b) As part of the Annual Review process for CYP in Years 5 and 9

CYP who have an EHC Plan must have a review of their plan every year. The annual review is a chance for parents, professionals, and the CYP to discuss their progress towards their outcomes and review the content of their plan.

From Autumn 2025, for CYP in Year 5 and Year 9, their annual review will also be used to complete a 'Descriptor of Need' matrix. This will be collaboratively completed during the meeting, by all attendees, but as a minimum, to include: the young person, their parent/carer, setting staff who know the CYP well and an officer from the Local Authority. The officer from the Local Authority may be: an Educational Psychologist, a member of the Sensory/Physical Team, a health professional, a case officer, or a social worker for example.

The Descriptor of Need matrix completed at either the Year 5 or Year 9 annual review, will be used to update the funding amount that the CYP's setting receives to support their inclusion.

3. Who Should Use the Matrix

Professionals involved may include:

- Teachers and SENCOs
- Educational Psychologists
- Speech and Language Therapists
- Occupational Therapists
- Paediatricians
- Social Workers
- Mental Health Practitioners
- Members of the Sensory and Physical Team

4. Step-by-Step: How to Use the Matrix

The matrix contains Descriptors of Need that are colour coded, depending on which broad area of need they fall within. The 4 broad areas of need, as specified within the Code of Practice are:

	Cognition and Learning needs
	Communication and Interaction needs
	Sensory and Physical needs
	Social, emotional, and mental health needs

Within each of the 4 areas of need, are more specific Descriptors:

Area of Need: Cognition and Learning

Area of Need: Communication and Interaction

Area of Need: Sensory and Physical

Area of Need: Social, Emotional and Mental Health

The new Descriptors if Need matrix can be found [here](#).

Step 1: Gather Information and Evidence

Collect relevant reports, observations, assessments, CYP and family views.

Step 2: Highlight Best Fit Descriptors and Multi-Agency Discussion

a) As part of the Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment process

In addition to drafting a report, each of the professionals, including the CYP's current setting in discussion with the CYP's parents/carers, will complete where the CYP's needs fit within the 'Descriptor of Needs' matrix for their area of specialism. For example, the Speech and Language Therapist will highlight the best fit descriptor of the CYP's Speech, Language and Communication needs, or the Teacher of the Deaf will highlight the best fit descriptor of the CYP's Deaf/Hearing loss or a Mental Health professional will highlight the best fit descriptor of the CYP's Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs. **Note – there must be supporting evidence for each rating.**

The All Phase SEND panel will be used for a multi-agency discussion to moderate the 'Descriptor of Need' matrix for each child based on the professional reports received as part of the EHC Needs Assessment process. If the panel agrees to issue an EHC Plan, this matrix will be used to determine the level of funding that a setting will receive to support the CYP's inclusion.

b) As part of the Annual Review process for CYP in Years 5 and 9

For all CYP in Year 5 and Year 9 with an EHC Plan, in addition to reviewing progress towards their outcomes, their annual review will also be used to complete a 'Descriptor of Need' matrix. This will be completed collaboratively by a minimum of:

- the CYP and their parent/carer,
- setting staff who know the CYP well and
- an officer from the Local Authority, which may include: an Educational Psychologist, member of the Sensory/Physical Team, health professional, case officer, social worker etc.

The Descriptor of Need matrix completed at either the Year 5 or Year 9 annual review, will be used to update the funding amount that the CYP's setting receives to support their inclusion.

Note – there must be supporting evidence for each rating.

5. Linking the matrix to funding:

Matrix Score Calculator				
	Predictable	Exceptional Needs		
		Low	Medium	High
	0	2.6	3.7	4.5
Cognitive development, attainment and progress	☐	☐	☒	☐
Speech, Language and Communication	☐	☐	☐	☒
Curriculum access/pupil participation	☐	☐	☐	☒
Curriculum access/pupil participation	☐	☐	☐	☒
Curriculum access/pupil participation	☐	☐	☐	☒
Social Understanding and Communication	☐	☐	☒	☐
Sensory processing and integration	☐	☐	☒	☐
Flexibility, information processing and understanding	☐	☐	☒	☐
Physical Disability and Complex needs	☐	☐	☐	☐
Deaf Hearing Loss	☐	☐	☐	☐
Vision Impairment	☐	☐	☐	☐
Multisensory Impairment	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pupil participation in/response to education	☐	☐	☐	☐
Emotional health and wellbeing	☐	☐	☐	☐
Impact on self and others	☐	☐	☐	☐
Exceptional, complex circumstances	☐	☐	☐	☐
	0	0	14.8	9
				Matrix Score 24
				Matrix Band 3D
				Band Value PA £16,344
SEN Category				
Cognition & Learning				
Communication and Interaction				
Emotional, Behavioral and Social				
Sensory / Physical / Medical				

6. Process for recording the funding:

Once the funding has been agreed, the following process will be used to record the funding:

Step 1: Record banding decision, decision maker (e.g. All Phase SEND Panel) and date of decision on EMS in the individual pupil record as an activity and generate memo.

Step 2: Send memo to Finance Officers.

7. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

- Q: Can the Matrix be used without a diagnosis?

A: Yes. The matrix is based on presenting needs, not formal diagnoses.

- Q: What if professionals disagree on a level?

A: Use discussion to reach consensus. If not possible, record both views with rationale and the decision will be made by the multi-agency panel.

- Q: Is the Matrix linked to funding?

A: Yes, it will determine the level of funding that the setting will receive

8. Contacts and Support

For questions or support using the Matrix, contact:

- Associate DSEnDo Local SEN Advisory Team
- Educational Psychologist
- Health professional
- Member of the Sensory and Physical Team