

# Doncaster Strengths and Needs Analysis Tool



*Logo created by "Doncaster Young Advisors"*



City of  
Doncaster  
Council

## How might Cognition and Learning needs present?

When considering the concept of learning and why some children and young people may have difficulties, we firstly need to consider the process by which children acquire new knowledge and skills. The acquisition of new knowledge requires reinforcement across settings (home, school, etc.) and frequent opportunities for overlearning and consolidation of learning and skills.

Learners with cognition and learning needs may experience difficulties in acquiring, consolidating and retaining knowledge because they have yet to develop their skills in one or more areas of cognitive functioning.

Individual learners display a range of differences which will vary in severity and intensity and which may change over time. It is not expected that a learner will match all of the descriptors listed below. Learners who present with additional learning needs may experience difficulties in one or more of the following areas of cognitive functioning:

- Executive Function
- Emotional/Affective Learning Factors
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Other cognitive skills/abilities
- Experiential Factors

Learners to whom this guidance relates will present with a range of difficulties which challenge their learning and possibly also their social inclusion. Cognition and Learning difficulties cover a wide range of needs, including those referred to in the SEND Code of Practice (21015) such as:

- Moderate learning difficulties (MLD) - likely to need support in many areas of the curriculum
- Specific learning difficulties (SpLD) - affecting one or more specific aspects of learning. This encompasses a range of conditions such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia.

- Severe learning difficulties (SLD) - likely to need support in all areas of the curriculum and associated difficulties with mobility and communication
- Profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) - likely to have severe and complex learning difficulties alongside physical disability or sensory impairment.

In Doncaster, we use the term 'complex needs' to describe children who have needs across a range of areas and require support in most/all area of the curriculum.

As detailed an assessment as possible should ensure that the full range of an individual's strengths and needs are identified, this may need to go beyond the primary area of need. The support provided to an individual should always be based on a full understanding of their particular strengths and needs and seek to address them using well evidenced SEND provision targeted at their areas of difficulty.

The suggested targeted provision outlined within this guidance document, in addition to inclusive High-Quality Teaching as outlined in the audit tool, will support effective teaching and learning for this group of learners. The curriculum approaches and strategies detailed are not prescriptive or exhaustive and are intended as a guide.

Support and provision should be delivered in accordance with a learner's assessed needs and agreed outcomes.

### Guidance to support the identification of strengths and needs

This is not a tool for diagnosis but can be used to support the setting processes to identify a learner's strengths and needs in the area of Cognition and Learning. SENDCOs can work with teachers to use this when they are raising concerns around possible SEND within this broad area and continue to use it as needed, within the Assess phase of the Graduated Approach.

When considering 'What do our observations tell us?' it may be useful to reflect on and record your thoughts on the following:

- What does the learner's strength or difficulty in each area look like and how do we know?
- Do the learner's strengths and needs present differently in different contexts and environments, including at home; when does this happen, when does it not happen?
- To what extent is this need or difficulty having an impact on learning?
- Are there areas we are not sure about and need further assessment? How will you do this? Do we need to look at any other areas of need?
- What needs, gaps in or barriers to learning can we work on improving and which can we help to work around?

After using this tool, see the DESCRIPTION OF **TARGETED PROVISION** column below for suggestions around the type of support and intervention to consider.

Cognition & Learning Needs Supporting the analysis of strengths and needs			What do our observations tell us? Comments – use the prompts questions to help with analysis
<b>Executive functioning skills</b>	<b>May experience some difficulty with some of the following</b>	(The suggested provision will support effective teaching and learning for this group of learners. The curriculum approaches and strategies detailed are not prescriptive or exhaustive. They are designed to guide settings and should be delivered in accordance with the learner's needs and agreed outcomes).	
		<b>Description of targeted provision</b>	
<b>Working memory:</b> the ability to hold verbal or visual information in mind (short-term memory) and process this to achieve a result (working memory). This includes processing new information and information from long-term memory.	Following instructions	<b>Curriculum Approaches and Strategies to support Executive Functioning</b>  An adapted curriculum which is developmentally appropriate, takes account of the learner's strengths and is targeted to address their learning needs and promotes independence.	
	Remembering answers		
	Following multiple step instructions		
	Blending and segmenting in phonics and/or completing mental maths due to processing demands		
<b>Sustained attention:</b> the capacity to maintain focus on a task for extended periods of time. Fatigue e.g. sleep, physical tiredness, limits attentional resources and interest is a strong mediating factor for attentional capacity	Maintaining attention to finish a task – may appear to drift off task/forget what they are doing	Individual programmes are in place to support specific areas of need. Where possible, they are incorporated within whole-class activities to ensure that learners are educated with their peers as much as possible. Pre- and post-teaching of core curriculum content is regularly in place.	
	Understanding what to do before starting work		

<p><b>Response inhibition:</b> the capacity to stop and think before doing something.</p> <p>Resisting impulses gives us the time to evaluate a situation before reacting and helps to maintain focus. Requires attention and effort; both impacted by other factors.</p>	Resisting impulse to call out or interrupting	<p>Individual resources used where necessary e.g. modified worksheets, personal visual instructions to access information and materials.</p> <p>Individual visual and pictorial aids are used to allow learners to access key information needed to complete tasks without unnecessary memory loading, e.g. task management boards, word banks for spelling and vocabulary when the objective is expressive writing, dual coding.</p>	
	Maintaining focus by ignoring distractions around them		
<p><b>Flexibility:</b> capacity to update our understanding when presented with new information. This can include obstacles, setbacks, mistakes, or simply just a different way of looking at things. Often seen as being adaptable.</p>	Open-ended tasks such as creative writing	<p>Consideration is given to seating arrangements to help minimise distractions and encourage children to learn with and from their peers as much as possible.</p> <p>Learning is supported and consolidated throughout the day.</p> <p>Learners are taught in context where possible and are given opportunities to practise skills in the real world, e.g. using real money, visiting a shop to practise buying goods.</p>	
	Managing changes in routine		
	Accepting alternatives within a task or situation		
<p><b>Task initiation:</b> the ability to understand how to begin a task, and initiate the task without unnecessary delay. Often referred to as procrastination; can often be impacted by our interest and/or when lacking confidence.</p>	Starting a piece of work	<p>Learners are given the information they need immediately prior to a task, e.g. labelling objects and items.</p> <p>Individualised rewards and motivators are used intrinsically as part of the interventions offered.</p>	
	Leaving homework/assignments to the last minute		
	Making decisions		
<p><b>Emotional control:</b> the ability to recognise and regulate emotions in order to achieve the goal we have set. Heightened emotions take away attention from the task/situation, and focus this on self-preservation.</p>	Confidence to achieve a goal – may appear to shut down when this is lacking		
	Processing too much info may feel overwhelming		
	Managing emotions around peer disagreements		

<p><b>Goal directed persistence:</b> the ability to devise a clear goal, plan out the steps to achieve this and continue to action each step through to goal-completion. Involves maintaining focus in the face of challenges/distractions.</p>	Starting a piece of work/project with a clear goal in mind	<p>Specific feedback is given using visual and/or concrete rewards, provided immediately following positive engagement/learning behaviours.</p> <p>Adults model, directly teach and support learners to use metacognitive and self-regulation strategies at all times during the day. Staff give verbal overview of stimulus materials using simple language.</p> <p>Staff model logical reasoning processes and actively support learners to apply the same strategies in a similar exercises or task.</p> <p>Staff use a high level of mediation to support learners in working as independently as possible without 'doing the work for them'. This may be through highlighting important information, asking pertinent questions, scaffolding, modelling etc</p>	
	Making choices to stick to a plan		
	Maintaining focus in the face of challenges - may instead spend time based on immediate needs and interests only		
<p><b>Metacognition:</b> the capacity to take a 'bigger picture' view of how we are acting/achieving/performing in pursuit of a goal. This requires self-awareness to reflect, monitor, evaluate and adaptively plan within a task.</p>	Ability to analyse, reflect and adapt	<p>Staff model logical reasoning processes and actively support learners to apply the same strategies in a similar exercises or task.</p> <p>Staff use a high level of mediation to support learners in working as independently as possible without 'doing the work for them'. This may be through highlighting important information, asking pertinent questions, scaffolding, modelling etc</p>	
	Awareness of the impact of their actions		
<p><b>Planning and Prioritisation:</b> the ability to map out each step needed to reach a goal/complete a task. This involves being able to decide what is or is not important to focus on. Often requires working memory/flexibility</p>	Ability to see the steps in achieving goal; difficulty doing this may feel overwhelming	<p><b>Staffing</b></p> <p>An enhanced level of targeted support in class by teacher or support staff on a small-group or individual basis targeted to address their learning needs.</p> <p>Learners are actively supported to access extra-curricular activities alongside their peers.</p>	
	Managing the need for perfection		
	Being ready with what's needed to start a task/activity		
<p><b>Organisation:</b> the ability to develop, plan and action approaches and/or systems to be able to order information and/or resources around us. This can be</p>	Organisation of resources they need around them - may lose things e.g. permission slips		
	Organisation of work on a page – may appear untidy and disorganised		

<p>general i.e. daily activities, or task specific i.e. new tasks/problems.</p>	<p>Managing time restraints e.g. getting dressed and other activities</p>	<p>This may require additional adult support or adaptation of activities.</p>		
<p><b>Time management:</b> the capacity to judge the passing of time, estimate how much time might be needed to complete individual tasks and adapt performance speed in response</p>	<p>Regularly needing to restart an activity from the beginning</p>			
	<p>Allowing enough time to complete tasks</p>			
	<p>Sticking to a time schedule</p>			
	<p>Ability to complete a task they have started; this may lead to frustration</p>			
	<p>Undertaking a task allowing enough time to complete it – may start a task at the last minute</p>			
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Cognition and Learning</b> Supporting the analysis of strengths and needs</p>				<p><b>What do our observations tells us?</b></p>
				<p><b>Comments – use the prompts questions to help with analysis</b></p>
<p><b>Emotional/Affective Learning Factors</b></p>	<p><b>May experience difficulties with some of the following:</b></p>	<p>The suggested provision will support effective teaching and learning for this group of learners. The curriculum approaches and strategies detailed are not prescriptive or exhaustive. They are designed to guide settings and should be delivered in accordance with the learner's needs and agreed outcomes.</p>		
		<p><b>Description of Targeted Provision</b></p>	<p><b>Curriculum Approaches &amp; Strategies</b></p>	
<p><b>Accessibility to assistance:</b> can seek help and is willing to become involved in collaborative exchange.</p>	<p>Engagement with others in the lessons – may appear withdrawn, frustrated, upset during lessons</p>	<p>Support the learner in understanding their learning differences and development of the ability to self-advocate in order to meet their needs.</p>		
	<p>Accepting and responding to adult or peer support within a piece of work/activity</p>			



<p><b>Frustration tolerance:</b> ability to take learning risks: the learner attempts problems/tasks despite perceived difficulty. Wants to try a harder level.</p>	<p>Confidence to 'have a go'</p>	<p>Opportunities and support for learners to gain the language to express their feeling and concerns.</p>	
<p><b>Interest/curiosity:</b> asking questions, wanting to get involved.</p>	<p>Showing interest in activities or topics - may appear passive</p>	<p>Support to enable the learner to engage with others in the lessons, provide opportunities to develop the learner's strengths and interests alongside peers.</p>	
	<p>Asking questions to find out new things</p>	<p>Praise whenever they attempt problems/tasks despite perceived difficulty.</p>	
	<p>Willingness to explore new topics, activities – may seek out familiar activities/toys</p>	<p>Provide regular wellbeing check-ins where needed</p>	
<p><b>Confidence:</b> self-efficacy, growth mindset: the belief they have control over achieving something and will have a go.</p>	<p>Trying hard when work appears difficult – may default to feeling defeated and believing they will fail, recalling previous experience of getting something wrong</p>		
	<p>May feel learning is too hard</p>		
<p><b>Cognition and Learning</b> Supporting the analysis of strengths and needs</p>			<p>What do our observations tells us?</p> <p>Comments – use the prompts questions to help with analysis</p>
<p><b>Literacy</b></p>	<p><b>May experience difficulties with some of the following:</b></p>	<p>The suggested provision will support effective teaching and learning for this group of learners. The curriculum approaches and strategies detailed are not prescriptive or exhaustive. They</p>	

		are designed to guide settings and should be delivered in accordance with the learner's needs and agreed outcomes.	
		Description of Targeted Provision	Curriculum Approaches & Strategies
<b>Accuracy including phonic awareness:</b> accurate and fluent reading and spelling at word and sentence level, in tests and throughout general writing.	Phonological awareness - identify the sounds of speech	Alternative approaches to the teaching of reading and writing, such as whole word reading in addition to the teaching of phonics, using multi-sensory, cued approaches to early literacy e.g. Literacy intervention programmes such as Direct Phonics.  An individualised programme of work which is developmentally tailored and delivered according to needs and linked to whole-class learning. This is offered several times during the week with lots of repetition, consolidation and overlearning.  Use of specific evidence-based programmes or packages delivered regularly with individual support from staff who have received relevant training, see link below. <a href="https://www.evidence4impact.org.uk">https://www.evidence4impact.org.uk</a>	
	Segmenting phonemes		
	Blending phonemes		
	Identifying start, middle and end of sounds		
	Uses phonic knowledge to decode new/unknown words		
	Attempts at using phonics to spell unknown words Reading high frequency and 'tricky' words correctly		
	Spelling high frequency and 'tricky' words correctly		
<b>Fluency:</b> accurate and fluent reading at word and sentence level.	Hesitancy when reading		
	Multiple errors		
	Need to de-coding majority of words		
	Lack of self-correction		

	Losing place when tracking text		
	Word substitution often not in context		
<b>Comprehension:</b> May be impacted by word reading being slow or weak language skills	Vocabulary (word knowledge)		
	Connecting ideas within a text		
	Inferring information		
	Noticing when something in the text doesn't make sense		
<b>Handwriting/recording of work:</b>	Enjoyment in writing - may appear laborious and effortful		
	Orientation and spacing of writing		
	Some letter reversals		
	Letter formation		
	Speed of writing may be slow		
	Copying writing may be slow		
<b>Cognition and Learning</b>			<b>What do our observations tells us?</b>
<b>Supporting the analysis of strengths and needs</b>			
<b>Numeracy</b>	<b>May experience difficulties with some of the following:</b>	The suggested provision will support effective teaching and learning for this group of learners. The curriculum approaches and strategies detailed are not prescriptive or exhaustive. They are designed to guide settings and should be delivered in accordance with the learner's needs and agreed outcomes.	
		<b>Description of Targeted Provision</b>	<b>Curriculum Approaches &amp; Strategies</b>

<p><b>Understanding mathematical concepts:</b> Key mathematical concepts to support the understanding of number and calculation such as numerosity, cardinality, subitising, estimation, sequencing &amp; ordering, place value</p>	Can count but difficulty matching quantity to the written or spoken digit i.e. knowing that the written digit '3' represents three of something (numerosity)	<p>An individualised programme of work which is developmentally tailored and delivered according to needs and linked to whole-class learning. This is offered several times during the week with lots of repetition, consolidation and overlearning.</p> <p>Use of specific evidence-based programmes or packages delivered daily with individual support from staff who have received relevant training e.g. Use of specific evidence-based programmes or packages delivered daily with individual support from staff who have received relevant training, see the link below.  <a href="https://www.evidence4impact.org.uk">https://www.evidence4impact.org.uk</a></p> <p>Supporting children with Gaps in their Mathematical Understanding – National Strategies  Information on evidence-based numeracy interventions.</p>	
	May be able to count a group of objects, but when asked, 'So how many are there altogether?', they are unable to answer (cardinality)		
	Looking at a small group of objects (up to 5) and know how many there are without counting (subitising)		
	Learning number names and recite them in sequence forwards and backwards (sequencing/ordering)		
	Understanding the position of a digit in a number affects its value		
	Understanding the principle of exchange		
	Understanding the relational aspect of number e.g. that 4 comes before 5 and after 3		
	May always need to count in ones when tackling calculations, even for small quantities (stuck in a unitary concept of number)		
	Estimating may be inaccurate; may be unable to say how they came to this guess		
	Understanding of the concept of multiplication, division, subtraction		

	Not making links with real life examples of use of numeracy		
<b>Sequencing/pattern spotting</b>	Time tables		
	Telling time		
	Days of the week, months of year		
	Understanding before/after		
	Routines in setting		
<b>Calculating and following procedure</b>	One to one correspondence - accurately pointing to each object as they count		
<b>Understands language used in maths problems</b>	Understanding and using technical vocabulary for maths concepts		
<b>Cognition and Learning Supporting the analysis of strengths and needs</b>			<b>What do our observations tells us?</b>
			<b>Comments – use the prompts questions to help with analysis</b>
<b>Other Cognitive Skills/Abilities</b>	<b>May experience difficulties with some of the following:</b>	The suggested provision will support effective teaching and learning for this group of learners. The curriculum approaches and strategies detailed are not prescriptive or exhaustive. They are designed to guide settings and should be delivered in accordance with the learner's needs and agreed outcomes.	
		<b>Description of Targeted Provision</b>	<b>Curriculum Approaches &amp; Strategies</b>
<b>Reasoning - verbal</b>	Thinking, analysing and problem-solving with objects, pictures, diagrams, numbers and shapes without relying on language	Interventions and structured programmes may be advised or devised with the support of specialist support service e.g. Educational Psychology	
	Spatial awareness i.e. playing non-verbal games involving shapes and numbers		

	Recognising sequences	Pre-teaching, where vocabulary, topics and concepts are introduced to learners before being covered in class.	
	Constructing materials with accuracy		
<b>Processing speed</b>	Following directions with several steps	Post-teaching activities whereby additional time is spent making sure learners have mastered what has been covered in lessons.	
	Responding promptly to instructions and directions		
	Making sense of information when given		
	Getting things done in appropriate time		
<b>Memory: short term, long term, working</b>	Short-term information the learner is currently thinking about or is aware of e.g. recalling what has just been read or said, where something was located just a moment ago	Transferable study skills sessions where a learner is supported to develop skills to help them independently access learning and complete tasks set.	
	Long term recall of previously learned material		
	Retaining learning over time		
	Making links to prior learning		

Cognition and Learning

What do our observations tells us?

Supporting the analysis of strengths and needs			Comments – use the prompts questions to help with analysis
Experiential Factors	May experience difficulties with some of the following:	The suggested provision will support effective teaching and learning for this group of learners. The curriculum approaches and strategies detailed are not prescriptive or exhaustive. They are designed to guide settings and should be delivered in accordance with the learner's needs and agreed outcomes.	Comments
		Description of Targeted Provision	
<b>Knowledge and Understanding:</b> Difficulties in this area may be due to limited or disadvantaged early care and or play/learning experiences; long or persistent absence from setting; loss and/or developmental trauma; differing early cultural background	Having knowledge and understanding of everyday things as would be expected of age	Personalised programmes, enrichment projects, extracurricular activities, according to learner's identified needs.	
		Nurture group provision - providing informal but structured instruction on developmental issues such as self-esteem, communication and life skills  <b>Learner and Family Centred Approaches</b>  Use of a home-setting communication system so that settings and families are aware of and can share current challenges and successes.  Consideration is given to how parent/carer and learner views will be sought and shared effectively as well as ensuring family members are able to process all relevant information presented to them in a timely manner, particularly before planning and review meetings.	

		<p>Agreed consistency of approaches between home and setting to support learning and development.</p> <p>Parents/carers are made aware of changes to setting timetable so that they can help prepare their child at home.</p> <p>As appropriate to age and stage, mechanisms for gathering the learner's views in order to understand their aspirations, to support their understanding of their own strengths and needs and the outcomes they are working towards.</p> <p>Signpost families to further guidance and support through the Local Offer e.g. The Early Support Service and also to courses designed for parents/carers.</p>	
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## **Additional areas to plan for**

### **Access Arrangements**

- Access Arrangements are pre-examination adjustments based on evidence of the learner's need and their normal way of working.
- Approved Access Arrangements and reasonable adjustments are in place for internal school tests, mock exams and external examinations.
- Access Arrangements are planned for at the earliest opportunity to enable learners to be fully able to utilise approaches such as a scribe, readers, exam reading pen, word processor, rest breaks as part of their 'normal way of working'.

### **Preparing for Transition**

- Planning meetings are arranged with the learner, their family along with key staff from the current and receiving setting/ school/college. Where needed, create a transition plan detailing the support required to enable a successful transition. This may also involve specialist advice and guidance.

### **Preparing for Adulthood**

- This means preparing our learners for the next phase of Education/Employability, Independence, Community Inclusion and to be Healthy. Preparation for this can start from the earliest years.
- Support, appropriate to the learners age and stage, to enable them to develop an understanding of their needs and communicate them to others with growing awareness of the adjustments they need to successfully access, participate and achieve in lessons and school life.
- Creative approaches are used to embed preparing for adulthood activities in the curriculum, everyday activities outside the

classroom and where needed, through targeted provision.

- A broad, experiential curriculum is offered to support the learner toward their next stage of education, employment or training which takes into account their strengths and interests enabling progression toward employment/adult education or community learning. This may include alternative qualifications pathways

### **Guidance: Staff Skills to support learners with Cognition and Learning needs**

- Teachers understand the cognitive development of learners in core areas of learning or within their specialist area and know how to adapt teaching, particularly where learners are working 'below the expected standard'.
- Teachers and support staff have a secure understanding of how a range of factors can inhibit learners' ability to learn within specific learning difficulties of a dyslexic or dyscalculic or dyspraxic nature and the approaches which enable learners to be taught effectively.
- Subject leaders and Heads of Department support the development of teachers understanding in this area and advise staff in how to adapt teaching to support learners' education at different stages of development.
- Subject leaders and Heads of Department use monitoring activities to ensure learners with a MLD and SpLD are fully accessing, participating and achieving in their subject area.