



Working with Children and Young People with Sensory Processing Needs

This document aims to inform parents and carers of children and young people (CYP) about Derbyshire's Local Offer to meet the needs of CYP with sensory processing needs.

What is sensory processing?

Our brain receives information from all of our senses including our sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste, proprioception (using our muscles to understand where our body is in space) and vestibular (the sense of how the body moves against gravity). We use this information so we can respond to the world around us.

Learning how to process information from our senses, can be challenging for all of us at times, but more challenging for some children. Some children may be oversensitive and/ or under sensitive to the information they get from their senses.

What difference does it make?

When a CYP is over and/or under sensitive to the information from their senses, this may affect their behaviour, their learning, their emotional response and social interaction.

Sometimes it helps us to understand why a child behaves, learns or responds by considering their sensory processing. It can help to understand why a child reacts to certain things (e.g. sensitivity to clothing)

These sensitivities are often seen in CYP with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Attachment Disorder, Cerebral Palsy and developmental coordination disorders.

Is there a name for this?

The American Academy of Paediatrics (2012) does not classify sensory processing difficulties as a distinct medical diagnosis and does not recognise it as a stand-alone disorder. They recommend that the term "Sensory Processing Disorder" should **NOT** be given as a diagnosis

Derbyshire Local Area (health, education and social care professionals) accept these recommendations and will use the term 'Sensory Processing Needs'

How can we support CYP with sensory processing needs in Derbyshire?

There is no specific 'treatment/cure' for sensory processing needs.

Sensory processing needs, can impact upon the daily lives of CYP in different ways. So it is important to consider 3 things- the child/young person, the environment and the task they are trying to do.

A number of different approaches have been developed by professionals which aim to help children who experience sensory processing difficulties.

In Derbyshire we have developed a graduated approach to support for CYP, based on best practice and available evidence from health, education and social care professionals.

This includes front line practitioners (early years, nursery & school staff) working with families to identify and address sensory processing needs at home and in the classroom using the "Derbyshire Sensory Processing Needs Toolkit" at an early stage. Additional support can also be drawn from "sensory champions" in specialist services across Education, Health and Social Care services.

Another approach, known as Sensory Integration Therapy (SIT) is also sometimes quoted, however there is currently limited evidence to show this is effective. The Royal College of Occupational Therapists states that Sensory Integration Therapy "may not be considered justifiable and cost-effective" (College of Occupational Therapists, 2015, p.7). This approach is therefore not supported or delivered in Derbyshire.

The graduated approach we take in Derbyshire, has been agreed and supported by the Derbyshire SEND Local Area including Derbyshire Parent Career Forum (Derbyshire parent carer voice), NHS Occupational Therapists, 0-19yrs public health nurses, Derbyshire county council early years specialist teachers, behaviour support educational psychology, autism services and social care. This approach will be reviewed regularly, as further research and evidence becomes available.

How can I take advantage of the Local Offer in Derbyshire for sensory processing?

Always speak to your nursery/ early years setting or school or health / social care professional first. Talk about any concerns you may have and ask to look at the Derbyshire Sensory Processing Needs Toolkit together.

Date: December 2019