

Ensuring that **SEND coverage** is embedded meaningfully within early years training programmes is essential. As professionals dedicated to nurturing every child's potential, it's vital that providers don't treat Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) as an add-on or a box-ticking exercise. But how can you, as an apprenticeship coordinator, training lead, or setting manager, spot whether SEND is genuinely integrated, or merely an afterthought?



This blog post explores key themes including workplace learning tied closely to daily practice, safeguarding, wellbeing, health and safety, risk management, child development knowledge, and EYFS principles. We'll reference essential tools like progress reviews and development coaching, and share insight into how leading organisations like Teach Early Years, Teachwire, and The Childcare Company embed SEND into their training and learning resource offerings.

Why Is SEND Coverage Critical in Early Years Training?

Over recent years, awareness has grown about the importance of a truly **inclusive curriculum** — one that doesn't just accommodate SEND children, but proactively supports their engagement, development, and wellbeing alongside their peers.



Policy, practice, and parent expectations consistently highlight the need for early years practitioners to understand:

- The unique developmental pathways for children with SEND
- How to apply the *Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) principles* with flexibility and sensitivity
- Safeguarding and risk management that anticipates specific needs
- The vital role of health, safety, and wellbeing, tailored to children's individual requirements
- Ongoing assessment and reflection to tailor professional practice accordingly

Without robust SEND coverage and practical application in training programmes, providers risk not meeting these expectations, potentially impacting outcomes for children and compliance with Ofsted frameworks.

Signs SEND Is Not an Afterthought in Your Training Programme

So how do you check? Here are some critical signs that SEND is meaningfully embedded rather than tokenistic.

1. Workplace Learning Is Tied Directly to Daily Practice

A key marker is whether SEND understanding, strategies, and considerations are woven into everyday duties within the setting — not reserved for occasional modules or optional learning.

Providers supported by companies like The Childcare Company often emphasise this connection, delivering *progress reviews* and tailored action plans which directly reflect SEND-related challenges seen in the room. For example, apprentices might:

- Observe and document how SEND children engage during free play and structured activities
- Reflect on adaptations made within their key person duties
- Identify ways to enhance inclusivity within the setting's learning environment

2. Safeguarding, Wellbeing, and Health & Safety Training Include SEND Elements

Effective safeguarding training must account for the vulnerabilities SEND children might face — from communication barriers to physical needs. Early years professionals should receive comprehensive instruction on recognising signs of abuse or neglect particularly relevant to children with SEND.

Wellbeing and health and safety courses should incorporate risk management tailored toward individual children's needs, demonstrating how practitioners can anticipate and minimise hazards while promoting inclusivity.

Reputable training providers such as Teachwire regularly publish safeguarding and health & safety modules exemplifying this inclusive approach — training content that settings can embed into their programmes.

3. Child Development Knowledge Is Applied With SEND in Mind

Child development theory in training should not be generic but rather contextualised to accommodate various SEND trajectories. Apprentices and staff should understand how developmental milestones might vary and how to scaffold learning accordingly.

The use of *development coaching* in progress reviews, often seen in partnership with companies like Teach Early Years, helps practitioners interpret developmental observations meaningfully and adjust practice.

Questions that training providers should be equipping apprentices to answer include:

- How does my understanding of typical development adapt when considering individual SEND cases?
- What strategies can I employ to support communication, social interaction, or physical development in SEND children?

4. Content Reflects EYFS Principles and Professional Practice in an Inclusive Way

Remember, the EYFS framework emphasises inclusion through principles like:

- Every child is a unique child
- Children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates
- Positive relationships are crucial
- Enabling environments foster learning

A training programme with meaningful SEND coverage embeds these principles not as abstract ideals but through practical, hands-on exercises, case studies, and reflection activities.

For instance, apprentices might review teaching plans and identify how activities could be adapted or differentiated for SEND accessibility — or plan risk assessments with SEND considerations front and centre.

Provider Questions to Ask: Reflecting on Your Training Programme's Inclusivity

As a training lead or coordinator, asking the right questions helps reveal whether SEND is truly integrated. Use this checklist when reviewing or commissioning programmes:

Question Why It Matters What to Look For Is SEND content threaded through all training modules or isolated?

Integration ensures practical skills; isolation suggests a tick-box approach. Look for SEND examples in safeguarding, health & safety, child development, and EYFS practice sections. Does the programme provide workplace learning opportunities focused on SEND? Theory alone is insufficient; application improves understanding. Check if progress reviews include SEND-focused reflections and development coaching. Are apprentices supported to tailor learning environments to SEND children? Adaptability is a core part of professional practice. Evidence of practice planning, risk assessments, and human resource support for SEND adaptations. Are safeguarding and wellbeing modules inclusive of SEND-specific vulnerabilities? Children with SEND can be disproportionately at risk. Modules with case studies or scenarios focusing on SEND children. Is progression

tracked and coached to ensure continual improvement in SEND understanding? Regular reviews facilitate reflective practice and skill development. Documentation of progress reviews that include SEND objectives and development coaching feedback.

Practical Tips to Strengthen SEND Coverage in Your Training

1. **Use Real-Life Case Studies:** Incorporate practical examples reflecting SEND scenarios in everyday settings. Companies like Teach Early Years provide excellent downloadable resources that help apprentices visualize inclusive practice.
2. **Embed Progress Reviews with SEND Focus:** Ensure that apprentices and staff regularly discuss how SEND considerations influence their work. This can guide personalised development plans and coaching conversations.
3. **Collaborate with Specialist Organisations:** Partner with agencies or local SEND specialists to enrich training content and offer expert insight.
4. **Promote Reflective Practice:** Encourage apprentices to document and reflect on adjustments made within their key person duties or group activities for SEND inclusion.
5. **Leverage Technology and Resources:** Tap into platforms like Teachwire, which frequently publish SEND-focused articles, CPD ideas, and training updates.

Conclusion

Checking if **SEND is more than an afterthought** in a training programme requires a strategic, multi-angle approach. It's about verifying that SEND is deeply embedded within workplace learning, safeguarding, wellbeing, child development, and EYFS professional practice—not just a standalone topic.

Tools like *progress reviews* and *development coaching* help maintain this focus while enabling apprentices to translate learning into their daily practice effectively. By asking sharp provider questions and drawing on quality resources from trusted organisations like The Childcare Company, Teach Early Years, and Teachwire, you can ensure that SEND coverage in training programmes empowers teachearlyyears.com early years practitioners to create truly inclusive environments.

The children deserve nothing less.