

[Home](#) > [Residents](#) > [Education and schools](#) > [Local offer](#) > [Professionals](#) > [Graduated approach](#) > [Social, emotional and mental health](#) > [Social emotional and mental health introduction](#)

Social, emotional and mental health - introduction

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Children display challenging behaviour for numerous reasons and their behaviour does not necessarily mean they have an SEN need. It is important to look beyond the behaviour to identify an underlying cause.

Behaviour serves two purposes, to communicate a need or solve a problem. Only where the behaviour is a result of an underlying difficulty would this be regarded as a special need.

Children and young people can experience a wide range of social and emotional challenges that manifest themselves in different ways, for example they may become:

- Withdrawn
- Passive
- Socially isolated
- Disruptive (low level/extreme)
- Aggressive
- Hyperactive

All children and young people may demonstrate these behaviours at certain points in their lives. However, if these behaviours are severe, persistent and long term they could well be the result of an SEMH difficulty. Pupils with SEMH issues may struggle to cope with school routines or even resist going to school in the first place. They can have difficulties making and sustaining relationships or concentrating on their work. They may be the target of bullying, or engage in bullying-type behaviours themselves.

A child or young persons SEMH challenges can cause a barrier to their learning.

Social difficulties - forming and maintaining friendships, communicating effectively on a social level and coping in group situations.

Emotional difficulties - difficulties with their emotional wellbeing which leads children to becoming dysregulated leading to difficulties in forming relationship and attending to lessons.

Mental health difficulties - a persons mental health needs fluctuates throughout their life. As children and young people move within the mental health continuum, they may experience fears and worries and present with disruptive behaviours leading them to require additional support.

[↑ Back to top](#)

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