

Principles of support planning

March 2026



Background

The Inclusion Ambassadors are a group of secondary school-aged pupils from across Scotland with additional support needs. The group are supported by Children in Scotland to share their views on additional support for learning, and as of March 2026 the group has 18 members from 15 local authorities. This resource highlights the group's experience of support planning in school and sets out their *Principles of Support Planning*.

Getting the right support is essential for young people with additional support needs to feel included and engaged at school. The Inclusion Ambassadors have expressed that young people should be involved at every stage, alongside adults who know and understand them.

Good support planning is ongoing, with regular check-ins, honest communication, and time to reflect on what's working. It doesn't need to be complicated, but it does require adults to listen and take young people's views seriously. Following these principles helps make support planning more meaningful and effective.

This document is intended to support all adults who are involved in additional support for learning and the principles are intended to apply to the support received by **all** children, not just those with statutory plans in place.



Principles of support planning

The Inclusion Ambassadors say that support planning should:

1 Be centred around the child or young person

Involve young people at every stage so support meets their needs, goals, and comfort level. Respect their independence and make sure they understand and agree with the plan.

"You should only get support when you want or are comfortable with it"

Member of the Inclusion Ambassadors

"Sometimes I can do things on my own and I don't need lots of people for support"

Member of the Inclusion Ambassadors

"It [support planning] should be involving the pupils to make sure they get what they need"

Member of the Inclusion Ambassadors



2 Offer flexible ways to take part

Give young people choices in how they share their views. This can include informal chats, one-to-one discussions, or writing it down. Arrange meetings at times that suit them with adults they know and trust, and make sure they have time to prepare.

“There should be options for how you want to be included”

Member of the Inclusion Ambassadors

“There needs to be meetings with people you actually know and work well with”

Member of the Inclusion Ambassadors

“It matters who you’re talking to”

Member of the Inclusion Ambassadors

3 Be clear and consistent

Support plans should be easy to understand and applied consistently by all staff. While support might look different for different lessons, it should always be aligned with the agreed plan. When this happens, young people feel happier and safer in school. We also consistently heard about the negative impact of inconsistent support:

“It [support] should always align with the plan”

Member of the Inclusion Ambassadors

“They don’t always tell you what’s happening”

Member of the Inclusion Ambassadors

4 Communicate clearly and follow through

Explain what support will be provided and when support may have to change. Support should not change without letting the young person know.

“They keep saying they’ll do things and then never do”

Member of the Inclusion Ambassadors

“You’re always having to repeat yourself”

Member of the Inclusion Ambassadors

“They always organise it [support planning meeting] for when I’m not available”

Member of the Inclusion Ambassadors

“[Adults say], ‘We’ll see what she needs’, but they haven’t”

Member of the Inclusion Ambassadors

5 Be reviewed regularly

Check in often to see if support is working, what needs have changed, and if anything can be improved. Young people should feel their support is monitored and adjusted when needed.

“I wouldn’t know if my needs have changed because they don’t know what my needs are”

Member of the Inclusion Ambassadors

“They aren’t listening”

Member of the Inclusion Ambassadors

“The most support they did was letting me sit in the Hub. But I absolutely hate it”

Member of the Inclusion Ambassadors

6 Account for exams and assessments

Support should also be planned to take account of exams and assessments. Reasonable adjustments should be made to make sure that young people are able to access exams and assessments. Young people should be well prepared and understand what to expect before being assessed.

“During exams I lose supporting adults”

Member of the Inclusion Ambassadors

7 Consider wider achievements and school life

Support planning should consider the young person’s wider school experience, beyond academic achievement. This includes their wellbeing, sense of belonging, and participation in school life.

“School shouldn’t be just about preparing for a career”

Member of the Inclusion Ambassadors

“It could encourage people to find their identity”

Member of the Inclusion Ambassadors





Implementing these principles

The Inclusion Ambassadors have clearly identified what good, person-centred support looks like from their perspective. We know that in many cases these will be being delivered in practice.

We believe the principles outlined can support ongoing improvement in delivery of additional support for learning.

To support with this, we would encourage all practitioners and professionals involved in additional support for learning to consider the following:

1. How well do I realise the Inclusion Ambassadors Principles of Support Planning?
2. How well are these principles reflected in our policies, processes and approaches?
3. How could we use these principles to adapt and improve how we plan support in our setting?

These principles were developed to support good practice and aims to help children entitled to additional support for learning get the most out of their education. Please contact the team if you would like to discuss how these can be used in your setting.



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