



# Assistant SENCO programme

Funded through the Growth and Skills levy





## Welcome to the Assistant SENCO programme





Looking to get involved in SEND management and make a significant impact in your school's SEND team? Through this programme, you'll develop a deep understanding of national policies and legislation, learn how to support your school's improvement plan, and gain the skills to deliver effective projects, directly putting into operation your SENCO's strategic vision.

By completing this programme, you will be well-prepared to grow in the Assistant SENCO role, helping to create a positive and inclusive learning environment, and enabling all pupils to receive the support they need to thrive.

The course is co-designed by SEND experts from Real Training and ESF Apprenticeships and can be fully funded using the Apprenticeship Levy.

Upon completion, you will receive a Level 5 Operations Manager apprenticeship.

### At a glance:

-  **Duration:** 17 months
-  **Study method:** Online learning
-  **Qualifications:** Level 5 Operations Manager apprenticeship
-  **Delivery:** Delivered by ESF Apprenticeships

## Who we are

ESF Apprenticeships are an innovative Ofsted 'Outstanding' apprenticeship training provider, that creates opportunities and raises aspirations through apprenticeship pathways. Founded in 2011 by a team of teachers, we have deep roots within education and partner with schools, Multi-Academy Trusts and colleges to help build successful and effective teams.

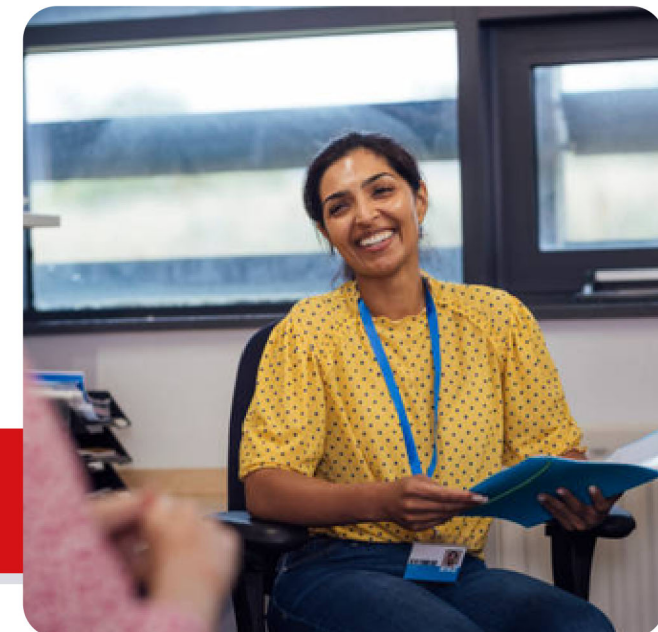
SEND experts from our sister company Real Training have co-developed this programme with us, bringing together the very best of our collective expertise.



## Programme overview

### Key areas of focus include:

- Activities to deeply learn about and understand your school and how well it operates
- Understanding the developing inclusion and SEND landscape, whilst identifying areas for development inline with your SENCO's vision
- Planning to manage and lead change via delivery of an impactful SEND project
- Leading and managing change – bringing the team with you
- Collaboratively evaluating impact





# Why study the Assistant SENCO Programme?

Designed for aspiring and existing Assistant SENCOs, this comprehensive programme will equip participants with the essential knowledge and skills to support the SENCO in delivering effective provision for pupils with special educational needs.

## This assistant SENCO course will enable you to:

Gain a deep understanding of the legal and inclusive foundations of SEND. You'll explore key legislation, laws and guidance, and learn how to develop and implement personalised support plans for pupils with SEND, including considering the effective allocation of resources.

Effectively align SEND strategies with broader school improvement plans and implement a SEND project to deliver meaningful and sustainable change.

Deliver a high-impact project to develop or improve your setting's SEND provision.

Gain the skills and confidence to support your SENCO in making data-driven decisions including monitoring and evaluation of activities and interventions for pupils with SEND.

Learn to effectively collaborate with your SENCO, teachers, support staff, parents and external agencies to document progress and ensure the individual needs of pupils with SEND are effectively met.

Receive expert guidance from SEN professionals in order to develop specialised expertise in SEND, enhancing your professional profile and career prospects.

Enhance your team management skills, including coaching and mentoring, conflict resolution and effective strategies for communication, collaboration and problem-solving.

# Meet your Assistant SENCO Curriculum Lead

## Chelsea Edwards

Chelsea is both the Curriculum Lead and a Tutor for the Level 5 Assistant SENCO programme. With years of experience as a SENCO, senior leader, and teacher across Early Years, Primary, and Specialist settings, she brings a wealth of expertise to support apprentices in developing high-quality SEND provision in their schools.



“ This programme will support you with your understanding of the role of an Assistant SENCO, the legislative and national context of SEND, and how you can best support your setting's SENCO to promote high quality SEND provision. Via our ESF Learn platform, you will be able to access learning content at your own pace, as well as attend our virtual workshops where we will collaborate and discuss the content and tasks for each topic on the course. ”

## How will I study?

The programme runs for 17 months during which you will participate in a variety of activities as outlined below. There will then be an 8-week End Point Assessment (EPA).

**Online learning**  
Study flexibly at a time and place that suits you

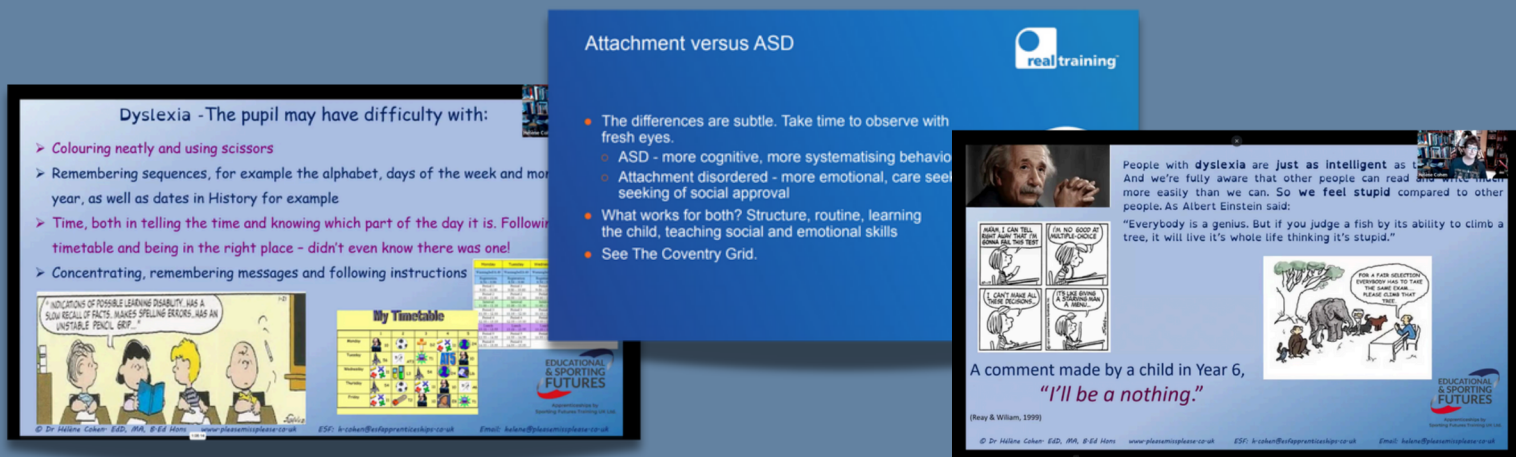
**Online progress reviews**  
One 30-minute review per term with your apprenticeship tutor and in-school mentor

**Self-directed project work**  
Apply new knowledge and skills through practical projects and research in your setting. Build a portfolio for immediate learning and impact

**Live online workshops**  
Monthly 2-hour mandatory workshops with SEND experts, plus follow-up discussions and opportunities to share good practice

You'll also receive exclusive invitations to our series of SEND Masterclasses.





## Exclusive invitations to SEND Masterclasses

Available to all ESF apprentices, our online masterclasses will develop your knowledge and understanding of supporting children with SEND.

Our SEND Masterclasses are delivered by experts in their field, offering a unique blend of specialist knowledge, practical strategies, and real-world experience.

With a focus on current research and inclusive practices, these masterclasses offer invaluable professional development tailored to the evolving needs of the SEND community, providing you with the tools and confidence to support all learners effectively.

Attendance of the SEND Masterclasses is optional, but highly recommended. Recordings will be made available for those unable to attend the live sessions.

Topics include:

- Dyslexia and practical tips to support pupils
- Trauma
- Communication needs
- Autism Spectrum Conditions
- Behaviour and barriers to learning – including mental health
- Understanding and supporting learners with sensory and visual needs
- Challenges related to accessing Maths
- Supporting and understanding attachment disorder
- Executive functioning and concentration difficulties (including ADHD)
- Speech and Language delay



## How will your school benefit?

- **Enhanced inclusion, SEND support and outcomes:** With your new knowledge and skills, you'll be equipped to play a significant role in your setting. Your team will be able to provide more comprehensive and effective inclusion services and SEND support and you'll directly enhance learning and wellbeing for all students with special educational needs.
- **Greater efficiency and support for the SENCO:** Throughout the programme you'll develop strong organisational, administrative and team leadership skills. This will enable you to streamline processes and take responsibility for key activities, freeing up your SENCO's time for other and/or increased activities.
- **Improved collaboration:** Gain experience of using enhanced communication and collaborative practices to work effectively within your SEND department, across the school, and with external partners and parents.
- **Positive school culture:** Embed a more inclusive school culture where every student feels valued and supported. You will support teaching and support staff, and promote inclusive practice, implement accurate record keeping, improve communication and collaboration – ultimately, contribute to improved outcomes and progress for students with SEND.
- **Future-ready workforce:** You'll develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours through the programme, and serve as an example of a member of staff that is invested in their own personal growth and development. Upon completion you will be armed with the experience to deal with real-world challenges as they occur in the future.



# The Learning Journey

## Phase 1: Welcome to your Apprenticeship

Navigating your learning platforms: ESF Learn & BUD  
Tracking your learning and supporting your progress  
Capturing your learning through evidence tasks  
Utilising resources for wider reading  
How you will be assessed: Formative and Summative processes

## Phase 2: Knowing Your Organisation

**Topic 1: Policy, Legal Framework, and Ethical Practice**  
Understanding organisational policies / procedures and legislative guidelines.

**Topic 2: Strategic Alignment, Operational Readiness, and Sustainability**  
Understanding school improvement goals for SEND, safety procedures, record-keeping, and the school's commitment to inclusion and sustainability.

## Phase 4: Preparing to Lead Change (SEND Project Scope and Planning)

**Topic 5: Project Management: People, Decisions, and Finance**  
Project, people, money, and change management skills to better plan tasks, support colleagues, and help SEND provisions run smoothly.

**Topic 4: Understanding the Educational Landscape**  
National and local SEND updates, community changes, and external support to help students, work together effectively, and ensure positive impact within the education system.

## Phase 3: Understanding the landscape and identifying areas for development

**Topic 3: Legal and Inclusive Foundations of SEND**  
Know the key SEND rules and how they help you support students fairly, work with your team, and contribute to an inclusive school.

## Topic 6: Data-Driven Decision Making and Communication

Use IT to manage SEND data, understand what the data means, keep it safe, and share information effectively with others to support students.

**Topic 7: Leadership and Essential People Skills: Communication, Development, and Conflict Management**  
Leadership skills to help a team work well together, support everyone fairly, achieve goals, and develop their skills.

## Topic 8: Project implementation and Resource Optimisation

Task management and effective resources, use data to track progress for pupils with SEND and manage budgets, and support positive changes within a team and school

## Phase 5: Leading Change - Implementing your SEND Project

Design and create a project plan for your SEND project. There's a wide scope of options for your project and you'll work with your mentor to choose an area that will have impact within your setting. Please see the next page for some project inspiration!

### Release time

Live delivery is one morning per month. We also advise one additional half-day (2 hours) release per week in which you'll complete your asynchronous learning and work-based projects; the timings for these can be flexible to fit around your work commitments. You and your mentor, will also need to be available for one 30-minute progress review per term.





## Assessment

Across the Assistant SENCO programme there are 10 topics, each with its own evidence task.

These comprise; 8 written tasks, 1 presentation including voiceover and a project proposal plan.

The tasks cover the requirements of the Operations Manager apprenticeship standard and focus on the varied knowledge, skills and behaviours required for an Assistant SENCO.

The final theme of the programme is focused around the delivery of a project, which will contribute towards the preparation for End Point Assessment.

The project proposal plan could focus on, for example:

- Introduction of a new process, service or product
- Identification and implementation of a change plan to improve efficiency or direct savings
- Implementation of a performance improvement plan, which requires significant collaboration with wider stakeholders
- Evaluation of an internal communications project involving communicating change to different stakeholders

## How does the funding work?

- If your school, nursery, MAT, or local authority has a salary bill of over £3 million, you will be a levy-paying organisation, which means 100% of the cost of the programme can be funded from your levy pot.
- Levy-paying employers can access their funds through the central Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS).
- Local Authority schools contribute to a large levy, known as a shared levy pot. Funding can be accessed even if your school payroll is below the £3 million levy threshold and this can be requested via the Local Authority's Apprenticeship Levy Manager.
- Where a maintained school sits within a Local Authority levy arrangement, ESF Apprenticeships can work with the Local Authority to explore procurement processes.
- Non-levy paying employers (i.e. with a salary bill of under £3 million) are required to contribute 5% to the cost of the programme - this is £450. Where this is the case, ESF Apprenticeships can work with your employer to seek support from a levy transfer partner with the aim of alleviating the fees, however this cannot be guaranteed.

The End Point Assessment consists of:

- 1: Written project report (4000 word count)
- 2: Presentation with Questions (20 min presentation with 40 minute questioning)
- 3: Professional Discussion underpinned by a portfolio of evidence

For further information about funding this programme (including frequently asked questions), please scan this QR code to visit our dedicated webpage.





## Off-the-job training

Off-the-job training is a key part of your development. This means dedicated time during your normal working hours to focus on learning and applying new skills related to your apprenticeship.

Think of it as your chance to dive deeper, expand your knowledge, and grow professionally.

All of the required learning during the programme (asynchronous learning, workshops, webinars and progress reviews) count towards your Off-the-job time.

It can however also include a variety of other activities, such as:

- Reading relevant articles or publications and staying up-to-date on education trends and developments
- Applying your knowledge to real-world projects, solidifying your skills and confidence

- Networking with peers and internal teams
- Spending time learning from colleagues and leaders across your setting
- Setting personal and career objectives and reflecting on progress
- Research and revision
- Coaching and mentoring with your apprenticeship tutor and your in-school mentor

Essentially, any activity that helps you develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviours outlined in your apprenticeship standard counts as "off-the-job" training. This dedicated learning time is crucial for your success.

## Eligibility

- Have experience working with SEN in a school, care and/or educational setting. This could be as a Teaching Assistant, HLTA, Learning Support Assistant (LSA) or equivalent role for at least a year (full-time equivalent).
- You must have lived in England for the last three years and have the right to work in the UK.
- You must be employed at least 16 hours a week and spend at least 50% of your working hours in England over the duration of the apprenticeship.
- You will need to declare you have achieved a minimum of GCSE English at Grade 4 (Grade C) or above, or hold an equivalent Level 2 Functional Skills qualification. This level of English proficiency is required as the apprenticeship is equivalent in academic standard to a foundation degree.

**Please note: This programme is open to delegates in England only.**

## How to apply

- 1

[Click here to register](#)

Programme: Level 5 Assistant SENCO  
Cohort: Choose your preferred start date

  - You'll need to enter your personal details, point of contact at your setting, your current and past employment and confirm your eligibility
  - You'll then receive a confirmation email, a welcome email and your login details for ESF Learn, our online learning platform where you will continue your application
- 2

**Complete your Applicant registration form**

  - Enter your personal details, contacts, tell us about your role and confirm your eligibility for the programme
  - Upload photo ID (e.g. a scan of your passport or driving licence)
  - Share your reasons for choosing this programme
  - Confirm the point of contact at your school (the person who will approve your application)
- 3

**We'll contact your employer using the details you provide, to confirm their support for your application and funding arrangements**

Our online dashboard will guide you through each step of the process.





## Frequently asked questions

### 01. Can I complete an apprenticeship as a part-time member of staff?

You need to be employed for a minimum of 16 hours per week to undertake the apprenticeship and will need to attend all the synchronous training events as outlined in the calendar. It is likely that the duration of the apprenticeship will be extended so that you have longer to complete the evidence tasks and asynchronous learning.

### 02. How do I know if my school pays into the Growth and Skills levy?

If your employer (school, nursery, MAT, or local authority) has a salary bill of over £3 million, they will be a levy-paying organisation, which means 100% of the cost of the programme can be funded from the employer's levy pot.

Non-levy paying employers (i.e. with a salary bill of under £3 million) are required to contribute 5% to the cost of the programme – this is £450. Where this is the case, we can work with your employer to seek support from a levy transfer partner with the aim of alleviating the fees, however this cannot be guaranteed.

### 03. What if my school is a local authority school and doesn't have a payroll of £3 million?

Local Authority schools contribute to a large levy, known as a shared levy pot. Funding can be accessed even if your school payroll is below the £3 million levy threshold and this can be requested via the Local Authority's Apprenticeship Levy Manager.

Most Local Authorities have a list of the apprenticeship providers they work with. If you let us know which local authority you fall under and we can check whether we are already on their list or work with your Local Authority to explore procurement processes.

### 04. What commitment do I need to make during my time at work in order to fulfil the requirements of the apprenticeship? Do I need to be 'off the job' 1 day per week?

Off-the-job training is dedicated time, during your normal working hours, in which you focus on learning and applying new skills related to your apprenticeship.

All of the required learning during the programme (asynchronous learning, workshops, webinars and progress reviews) count towards your Off-the-job time.

Additional activities such as project work, shadowing colleagues, wider reading and research all count. Via our online platform, ESF Learn, we're able to sign-post a number of opportunities which count as Off-the-job. During your enrolment meeting we can discuss how this can work alongside a busy job role!

### 05. If I move school halfway through the apprenticeship, is it transferrable to my new employer?

Yes, it is possible to change schools and continue on the apprenticeship. You'll need to speak to your apprenticeship tutor if this situation occurs so that we can ensure your new employer is suitable.

### 06. How can I apply for this programme?

Please see the 'How to Apply' page for a breakdown of the application steps. These will be completed online. You will be required to upload photo ID – you might like to look this out early on in the application process.





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