Curriculum Improvement Cycle
Draft Technical Framework
Foundation ASN Milestones

November 2026

Version 1.0

These are draft materials. The content, format and style are subject to change. They are being shared as part of the co-design process and in advance of engagement and feedback time during the 2026/27 session. There is no expectation on educators, schools or settings to do anything now with these drafts. It would not be appropriate to change current planning or tracking and monitoring systems in establishments at this stage.

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Introduction to the ASN Foundation Milestones

Learners who require additional support, for whatever reason, are not a homogeneous group. They are an integral part of Scotland's education system and should therefore be reflected throughout all aspects of the curriculum.

Although there is no formal national definition of complex needs, the Doran National Strategic Commissioning Group developed the following working definition in the Doran Review:

> 'A child or young person who has additional support needs arising from one or more severe complex factors or multiple factors (needs that are likely to continue for more than a year) is deemed to have 'complex needs'.'

A short-life working group of practitioners, leaders, curriculum specialists and critical friends collaborated to create this draft to align the original Milestones with the CIC framework and the Know-Do-Understand (KDU) model. The aim was to ensure coherence in how learning, progression and achievement are understood and supported across diverse learner pathways. The working group retained and adapted the original Milestones statements where appropriate.

In addition, some expectations within the draft CIC documents have been updated to reflect wider curriculum developments and changes in society ensuring that learning remains relevant and meaningful for contemporary contexts.

The working group welcomed the increased focus on learners with complex additional support needs but recognised that alignment alone will not address all of the challenges relating to curriculum, assessment, progression and accreditation for these learners. In particular, the challenge of interpreting "understanding" for learners with complex needs within the KDU model will be complex and be demonstrated in a wide variety of ways.

Progression and achievement look different for all learners. Although the statements illustrate potential progression, learners with complex additional support needs may progress in different ways and at different rates. Progression is often non-linear and highly individual, and achievement may take place within a developmental stage rather than through movement between levels. Learners may revisit, consolidate and apply learning in different ways and over different timescales. This should be recognised as an important aspect of progress. The original guidance outlines how to track progress through stages of support required and levels of engagement. This, or similar approaches to documenting progression, remain applicable.

Not every learner starts here before Early Level. For some learners, the Foundation and ASN Milestones can provide a developmental pathway that precedes engagement with aspects of Early Level. However, these documents are not intended to represent a separate curriculum level or a stage through which all learners should be expected to progress.

Important information about the learning

To support learning and engagement, it is important to consider how and where learning takes place across all areas of the day. This includes different subject areas, activities and daily routines, as well as the approaches, support and adaptations that help successful participation.

Consider communication preferences, environment, sensory needs, positioning, relationships and opportunities for engagement. These factors can have a significant impact on a learner's ability to learn, participate and demonstrate progression.

Progress may be made through small but meaningful steps. These should be recognised, celebrated and assessed using the **Continuum of Engagement**, ensuring that all achievements are captured in a personalised and meaningful way.

Understanding what others can do to optimise opportunities for learning is a key part of supporting progress and ensuring as much meaningful engagement as possible in everyday experiences.

Foundation ASN Milestones Purpose Statement

These form the foundations of learning for learners with complex additional support needs for all curricular areas. They focus on early communication; making connections; self and emotions; and functional movement. The ASN Foundation Milestones should be delivered through meaningful, motivating and developmentally appropriate learning experiences that are tailored to my individual strengths, needs and aspirations.

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To follow Summary of Progression

Strand	Sub-strand	Statements of Understanding ASN Foundation Milestones
Communication	**Attention**	Attention enables experiences, participation and understanding of the world making connections between self and the environment
	Communicating Preference and Choice	Communication through actions, feelings and /or preferred communication methods enable others to understand preferences, wants and needs.
	Interaction	Interaction develops through engagement with people, objects, activities and experiences, enabling participation, reciprocity and shared understanding.
Cognition		Learners develop an awareness of their world through exploration, familiarity, cause and effect, and participation in routines enabling connections to be made.
Self and Emotions	**Awareness**	Awareness of emotions develops in response to people, objects, activities and situations, enables connections to be made.
	Regulation	Recognition, expression and co-regulation develops self-emotional regulation, promoting wellbeing.
Functional Movement		Movement enables people to explore, participate in and interact with the world around them.

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Know-Do-Understand Strands

Strand	Communication					
	Attention		**Communicating Preference and Choice**		**Interaction**	
	Understand: Attention enables experiences, participation and understanding of the world making connections between self and the environment		**Understand:** Communication through actions, feelings and /or preferred communication methods enable others to understand preferences, wants and needs.		**Understand:** Interaction develops through engagement with people, objects, activities and experiences, enabling participation, reciprocity and shared understanding.	
	Know:	**Do:**	**Know:**	**Do:**	**Know:**	**Do:**
ASN Foundation Milestones	People, objects and experiences can be meaningful and worth tuning into. When motivated, attention helps me recognise what is happening around me and respond to it in my preferred style. Familiar routines help me make sense of what is happening and what comes next.	Show a simple reflex response to an individual stimulus. Show a simple reflex response to a range of sensory stimuli, objects, people and/or activities. Show awareness of something happening. Give a quick and fleeting response. Give inconsistent response. Give more consistent attention and response. Give shared attention to a range of sensory stimuli, objects, people and/or activities. Share a consistent response in familiar routines and situations. Anticipate within familiar routines and situations. Show understanding of a sequence of activities within a familiar routine. Demonstrate extended attention within familiar settings. Demonstrate extended attention within unfamiliar settings.	Some experiences, people, objects and activities have meaning and value for me. I have preferences, likes and dislikes. My wants, needs and intentions can be communicated in different ways. My choices can influence experiences, participation and outcomes.	Show pleasure/displeasure through non-verbal, physical or verbal response. Accept or reject sensory stimuli, objects, people and/or activities Indicate preferences in response to sensory stimuli, objects, people and/or activities. Consistently show and express preference to sensory stimuli, objects, people and/or activities. Communicate basic needs that enable comprehension by others, for example, more, again, finished, enough, stop. Make a choice using real objects, photos or symbols.	People, objects, activities and experiences can provide opportunities for connection and engagement. Interactions can happen in different ways. Interactions can be shared, continued and ended.	Show awareness of people and activities. Tolerate other people within personal space. Demonstrate a clear reaction to people and activities. Respond to facial expressions and/or body language. Show a response to a social interaction with familiar people and activities. Show a response to a social interaction with unfamiliar people and activities. Imitate during interactions using vocalisations and/or body movements. Maintain an interaction for a brief period. Terminate an interaction (may be unconventional). Terminate interactions in a conventional way, for example, by saying ‘bye’ or ‘all done’ or utilising pause function on digital alternative and augmentative communication device (AAC). Initiate interactions and takes turns within familiar and unfamiliar contexts. Initiate interactions with a familiar person or in a familiar situation.

						Initiates interactions with an unfamiliar person or in an unfamiliar situation. Takes turns in interactions with a familiar person or in a familiar situation. Takes turns in interactions with unfamiliar people and/or unfamiliar settings.

Notes

Give me a reason to communicate. The most successful communication opportunities are often meaningful, motivating and purposeful.

Immerse me in communication by modelling language through my preferred communication methods. The more I see others use my communication system, the more opportunities I have to learn and use it myself.

Create opportunities for communication within familiar, meaningful and motivating activities.

Recognise and respond consistently to all my communication attempts.

Adapt the environment to meet my sensory, physical and communication needs.

Give me planned opportunities for sensory input to support my regulation and readiness to communicate.

Look for my affirmation and rejection responses and help me to develop them. Underpin my learning through the development of communication pathways, not simply by seeing whether I can make a choice.

Provide appropriate levels of support, choice and challenge.

Build on my unique interests, preferences and strengths. Motivation and meaningful experiences can influence communication, attention and engagement.

Allow sufficient time for me to process, respond and communicate.

Observe and celebrate every step of progress and achievement.

Recognise that communication can happen in many different ways, including through movement, facial expression, vocalisation, gesture, touch, eye gaze, attention and shared experiences.

Recognise when I am ready to communicate. If I am not, consider what changes could help me to regulate and engage.

Model the communication methods you want me to use, whether these involve objects, signs, symbols, AAC or spoken language.

Respond to the meaning behind my communication, even when my message is not yet clear or conventional.

Ensure my communication system is always available and used consistently throughout the day.

Remember that every interaction is a communication opportunity.

Use the Continuum of Engagement to understand, support and evidence how I learn and communicate.

ASN Foundation Milestones

Cognition

Understand:
Learners develop an awareness of their world through exploration, familiarity, cause and effect, and participation in routines enabling connections to be made.

Know:	Do:
People, objects and experiences can be explored and investigated. People, objects and experiences can be familiar, remembered and have meaning. Actions can cause things to happen. Routines follow predictable patterns and can change.	Notice a stimuli. Follow/track a stimulus when it moves. Look around for disappearing stimuli. Explore toys and objects using one or two senses. Explore toys and objects with a wide range of senses. Demonstrate an interest in the environment. Show a preference for toys and objects. Respond differently to familiar and unfamiliar sensory stimuli, objects, people and/or activities. Seek a preferred or favourite toy or object in a familiar place. Return a familiar toy or object to a familiar place. Demonstrate an awareness of own possessions. Recognise that repeated actions lead to particular effects (cause and effect). Demonstrate an awareness that a specific toy or object has a purpose. Show awareness of a change or difference in a familiar activity or routine. Follow steps within a familiar routine. Begin to initiate or complete a familiar routine.

Notes

Help me to recognise that my actions can have an effect on people, objects and events around me.

Give me opportunities to anticipate familiar people, routines, activities and events.

Notice what captures and sustains my attention and use this to support my learning.

Repeat experiences frequently and consistently to help me build understanding and familiarity.

Value my attempts to explore, investigate and solve problems, even when the outcome is not successful.

Create opportunities for engagement within familiar and motivating activities.

Recognise and respond consistently to my communication and interaction attempts.

Adapt the environment to meet my sensory, physical and communication needs.

Give me planned opportunities for sensory input to support my regulation and readiness to learn.

Look for my affirmation and rejection responses and help me to develop them. Underpin my learning through the development of communication, not simply by seeing whether I can make a choice.

	Provide appropriate levels of support, choice and challenge. Build on my unique interests, preferences and strengths. Motivation and meaningful experiences can influence attention, engagement and learning. Allow sufficient time for me to process, respond and participate. Observe and celebrate every step of progress and achievement. Recognise that interaction can happen in many different ways, including through movement, facial expression, vocalisation, touch, attention and shared experiences. Recognise when I am ready to learn. If I am not, consider what changes could help me to regulate and engage. Use the Continuum of Engagement to understand, support and evidence how I learn and engage.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="4">ASN Foundation Milestones</td><td colspan="4">Self and Emotions</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Awareness</td><td colspan="2">Regulation</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Understand:
Awareness of emotions develops in response to people, objects, activities and situations, enabling connections to be made.</td><td colspan="2">Understand:
Recognition, expression and co-regulation develops self-emotional regulation, promoting wellbeing.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Know:
There are a range of emotions that we experience.

Experiences, people and environment affect how I feel and respond.

People show pleasure, pride and achievement in different ways.</td><td>Do:
Show basic emotions (happy, sad, angry, scared, surprise, disgust) through behavioural, physical, facial and vocal expression.

React in some way to the emotions of others.

Demonstrate a consistent emotional response to indicate displeasure to a range of sensory stimuli, objects, people and/or activities.

Demonstrats a consistent emotional response to indicate pleasure to a range of sensory stimuli, objects, people and/or activities.

Show emotional responses to a range of sensory stimuli, objects, people and/or activities.

Demonstrate pleasure in response to feedback from others.

Demonstrats a sense of achievement through behavioural, physical, facial and/or vocal expression.</td><td>Know:
Emotions can change.

Trusted adults support me to feel calm, safe and regulated.

Different people, strategies and supports help me to feel emotionally regulated.</td><td>Do:
Attempt to self soothe (may be unconventional).

Tolerate an adult’s attempts to intervene when distressed.

Accept redirection when distressed.

Use a range of sensory stimuli, objects and/or activities to self soothe at the direction of others.

Respond to adult support when distressed.

Select a range of sensory stimuli, objects and/or activities to self soothe.

Seek adult support when distressed.

Begin to regulate emotional response by using a range of sensory stimuli, objects, people and/or activities.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Notes
Help me to recognise that my actions can have an effect on people, objects and events around me.

Give me opportunities to anticipate familiar people, routines, activities and events.

Notice what captures and sustains my attention and use this to support my learning.

Repeat experiences frequently and consistently to help me build understanding and familiarity.

Value my attempts to explore, investigate and solve problems, even when the outcome is not successful.

Create opportunities for engagement within familiar and motivating activities.

Recognise and respond consistently to my communication and interaction attempts.

Adapt the environment to meet my sensory, physical and communication needs.

Give me planned opportunities for sensory input to support my regulation and readiness to learn.

Look for my affirmation and rejection responses and help me to develop them. Underpin my learning through the development of communication, not simply by seeing whether I can make a choice.

Provide appropriate levels of support, choice and challenge.

Build on my unique interests, preferences and strengths. Motivation and meaningful experiences can influence attention, engagement and learning.

Allow sufficient time for me to process, respond and participate.

Observe and celebrate every step of progress and achievement.

Recognise that interaction can happen in many different ways, including through movement, facial expression, vocalisation, touch, attention and shared experiences.</td></tr>
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	Recognise when I am ready to learn. If I am not, consider what changes could help me to regulate and engage. Use the Continuum of Engagement to understand, support and evidence how I learn and engage.

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<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">ASN Foundation Milestones</td><td colspan="2">Functional Movement</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Understand:
Movement enables people to explore, participate in and interact with the world around them.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Know:
Bodies can move and respond in different ways.

Different body parts have different functions.

Movement helps people interact with their environment.

Position, balance and coordination support participation.</td><td>Do:
Show an awareness of different body parts.

Demonstrate control of a body part (for example, stays still, turns head towards a stimulus or reaches hand towards a switch).

Maintain a position, for example, on side, sitting or standing,

Transition in and out of a position, for example, by sitting or standing.

Transition out with centre of gravity and returns.

Travel in different ways, for example, crawling, bottom shuffling, rolling, sliding, walking.

Move in a range of directions, for example, reaches or moves forward, backwards or sideways.

Start to control speed of movement.

Start to control force of movement.

Use hands, fingers or feet to explore objects.

Grasp and release a range of objects.

Hold and stabilise a range of objects.

Use hands, or another body part, to manipulate an object for a range of functions, for example, push, pull, open, close.

Start to coordinate actions, for example, walking and holding an object, reaching for an object.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="2">Notes
Use the Continuum of Engagement to understand and evidence how I learn and engage.

Check that I am positioned well before expecting me to move. Good positioning helps me access movement, communication and learning more successfully.

Small movements can require significant effort. Notice and celebrate the quality, intention and consistency of my movements, not just the size of the movement.

Recognise that I may become physically or visually fatigued. Changes in movement, attention or participation may indicate that I need a rest rather than that I am no longer interested.

Help me understand that my movements have an impact on the world around me through meaningful cause-and-effect experiences.

Give me opportunities to anticipate, initiate and repeat movements rather than always moving me through activities.

Functional movement develops through frequent opportunities across the day, not just during planned physical activities or therapy programmes.

Pause before helping. Give me opportunities to attempt movements independently and to show what I can do with the right support.

Be aware that discomfort, pain, illness or changes in muscle tone can affect my movement, participation and readiness to learn.

Check that my switch is positioned in the best location for me. My hand may not be the most effective access point. If I do not use the switch, do not assume I am uninterested. It may be that a different switch type or access site would work better for me.

Recognise that using eye gaze requires a great deal of coordination, visual attention and effort. I may become tired if I am still building up my stamina.

Give me meaningful reasons to reach, touch or kick. I am more likely to engage when my actions produce motivating and rewarding effects, such as sounds, lights, paint or movement.</td></tr>
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Declaration

The content of this document was written by the author, exercising full professional judgement. Education Scotland approved AI tools were used to support review, clarity, and quality assurance. Education Scotland staff retain full responsibility and have reviewed and approved all content.

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Version History

Version	Date	Detail
Version 1	4 November 2026	First released