



Action Research for Inclusion and Special Educational Needs (ISEND): Guidance Resource

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Reference for this guidance resource:

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For more information about this project or the guidance resource, contact: g.codina@derby.ac.uk

Overview

In 2022 the National Association for Special Educational Needs (nasen) launched the new '[Universal SEND Services](#)' programme. Funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and running from 2022 until 2025, this important work includes various elements including this Action Research for ISEND project.

What is Action Research for ISEND

Action Research for inclusion and special educational needs and disabilities (ISEND) provides a methodology for schools/FE colleges to develop a small-scale bespoke research project that clearly addresses an ISEND area for development.

Action Research is generally understood to be a way for practitioners to engage in a '*plan, act/observe, reflect*' research cycle. In this project, Action Research is set up as a two-stage cycle that also incorporates a study phase (i.e., a time for staff to engage with the freely available research evidence). For longer projects stage-two of the cycle can be repeated.

To support with the process of thinking through the ethical implications of small-scale practitioner research, an ethics checklist and amendable proformas are provided in this guidance resource.

How to use this Guidance Resource

This guidance resource has been written for those taking part in the DfE funded, nasen, Action Research for ISEND project.

It is also designed to be a freely available resource for any school/FE college who are interested in setting up their own Action Research for ISEND project. If you have any questions about the project, or Action Research for ISEND please feel free to contact the project lead (g.codina@derby.ac.uk).

To develop your own Action Research for ISEND project it is recommended you follow the Action Research steps as set out in Table 1 (page 6) of this guidance resource. The overview provided in Table 1 is then expanded and additional detail provided on pages 7-15 of this guidance resource. The Appendices are there to support you through some of the specific elements of Action Research; for example, like researching your topic of interest. For your convenience, some of the Appendices are also made available as Word documents (see the **Action Research for ISEND: Templates Resource**).

Action Research Cycle

Action research (as it is set out in this project) is a way for schools and FE colleges to engage in a methodology that supports the development of removing barriers to inclusion for learners who are on a setting's special educational needs register.

There are numerous models for action research but underpinning them all is a 'plan, act/observe, reflect' research cycle. It can be helpful to visualise action research as cyclical¹ as depicted in Figure 1.

For this project, the action research methodology is set out as a **study-plan-do-review** cycle. This language has been chosen so it maps onto the graduated response (assess-plan-do-review) as set out in the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2014²).

In this model of action research, emphasis is placed on schools/colleges:

- identifying an ISEND area for development
- reviewing the relevant freely available research literature
- developing a research plan
- engagement with the ethical implications of research
- implementing the research plan
- reviewing the data gathered
- reflecting on the meaning of the data
- based on reflections from cycle 1, developing and engaging in a second cycle of Action Research

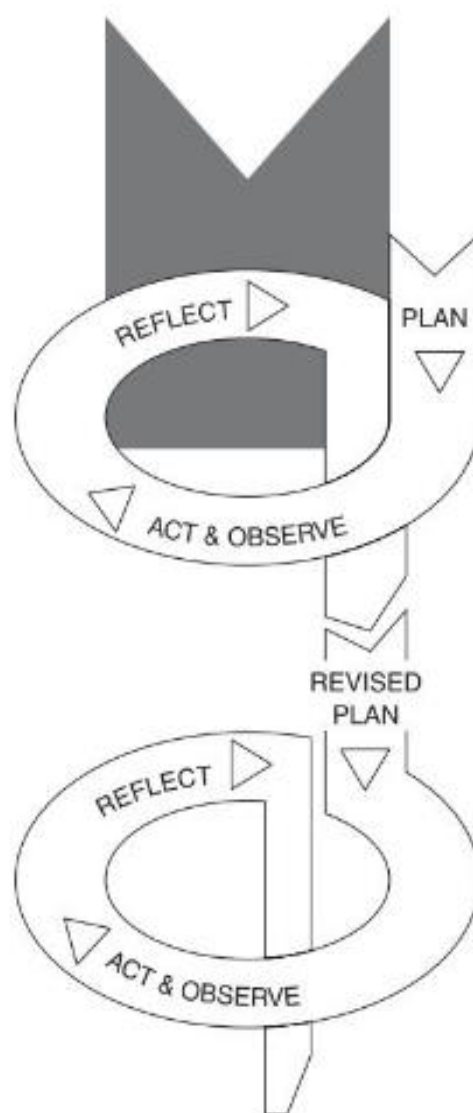


Figure 1. Action Research Cycle (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000)

To support you with the development of an Action Research for ISEND project, this guidance resource contains an overview of the Action Research process (see Table 1), which is then explained in greater detail (pages 7-15).

¹ Reference for Figure 1: Kemmis, K., and McTaggart, T. (2000) Participatory action research. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (Eds) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

² Department for Education and the Department for Health, DfE and DoH. (2014) [Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years](#), London, DfE and DoH.

Action Research for ISEND: Process overview

To help you navigate this guidance resource, Table 1 has hyperlinks inserted – press ‘Ctrl’ and the underlined link to move from Table 1 to the corresponding section of this guidance resource.

Action Research Cycle 1	Establish the Research Focus	Step 1: Identify the ISEND area for development which requires research	
	Study 1	Step 2: Review the research literature	
	Plan 1	First Plan	
		Step 3: Start the process of refining the research	
		Step 4: Decide what kind of action you are going to take (direct or enquiry)	
		Step 5: Consider research ethics (engage with ethics checklist)	
	Do 1	Step 6: Implement the first plan (either direct action or enquiry as action)	
	Review 1	Step 7: Review and reflect	
		Step 8: Analyse the meaning of the data gathered	
	Action Research Cycle 2	Study 2	Step 9: Review further literature if required
Plan 2		Second Plan	
		Step 10: Based on the ‘reflect’ phase, refine the research (this may involve revising or developing the research questions) and plan the next actions.	
		Step 11: Plan 2.2: Decide what kind of action you are going to take (direct or enquiry).	
		Step 12: Seek any further ethical permissions if needed (engage with ethics checklist).	
Do 2		Step 13: Implement the second plan – (either direct action or enquiry as action).	
Review 2	Step 14: Review and reflect		
	Step 15: Analyse the meaning of the data gathered		

Table 1 - Action Research for ISEND: Process overview

Action Research Cycle 1

Establish the Research Focus

Step 1: Identify the ISEND area for development which requires research

When first deciding to undertake Action Research for ISEND it is important to identify the area for development, issue, or problem about which you wish to conduct research.

Having identified the research focus it is often helpful to reframe the focus as a research question; see Table 2 for some examples.

Area for development, issue, or problem	Research question
A number of learners with a diagnosis of autism are finding it difficult to access Physical (PE) education lessons.	How can we develop Physical Education (PE) so as to ensure it is accessible to learners with autism?
We are finding it difficult to engage young learners meaningfully in the annual review of their Education, Health and Social Care plans.	What approaches will ensure that young learners are actively and meaningfully engaged in their annual review?
The majority of parents/carers of learners with SEND in our setting do not interact with the school.	Do parents/carers feel welcomed into our setting and how can we enhance their engagement?

Table 2: Area for research focus and related research question

Having drafted your research question, it is a good idea to keep this under continual review (especially as you work through Steps 2-5). You may find that as you develop and shape your project further, that you need to rephrase elements of the question, so it addresses more directly the exact focus of your project.

Study 1

Step 2: Review the research literature

When starting out on a research project it is generally a good idea to read about other's research in the area you are interested in. This step helps to open up a wider range of possible approaches to solving the problem. It may be that by reading around the topic you uncover new strategies you had not come across before or different ways of approaching the challenge, or it could be that your reading confirms some initial ideas you had already considered but were not sure whether to pursue.

To support with the process of finding relevant research literature see [Appendix 1](#): How to access freely available research literature of this guidance resource.

Plan 1

Step 3: Start the process of refining the research

Having completed a review of the research literature you now have a clearer idea of the context for your study.

Review your research focus through the lens of the research literature

To develop an impactful research project, you now need to view your research focus through the lens of the literature and see what this tells you about your research trajectory; [Figure 1](#) visually depicts what is meant by the phrase 'view your research through the lens of the research literature'.

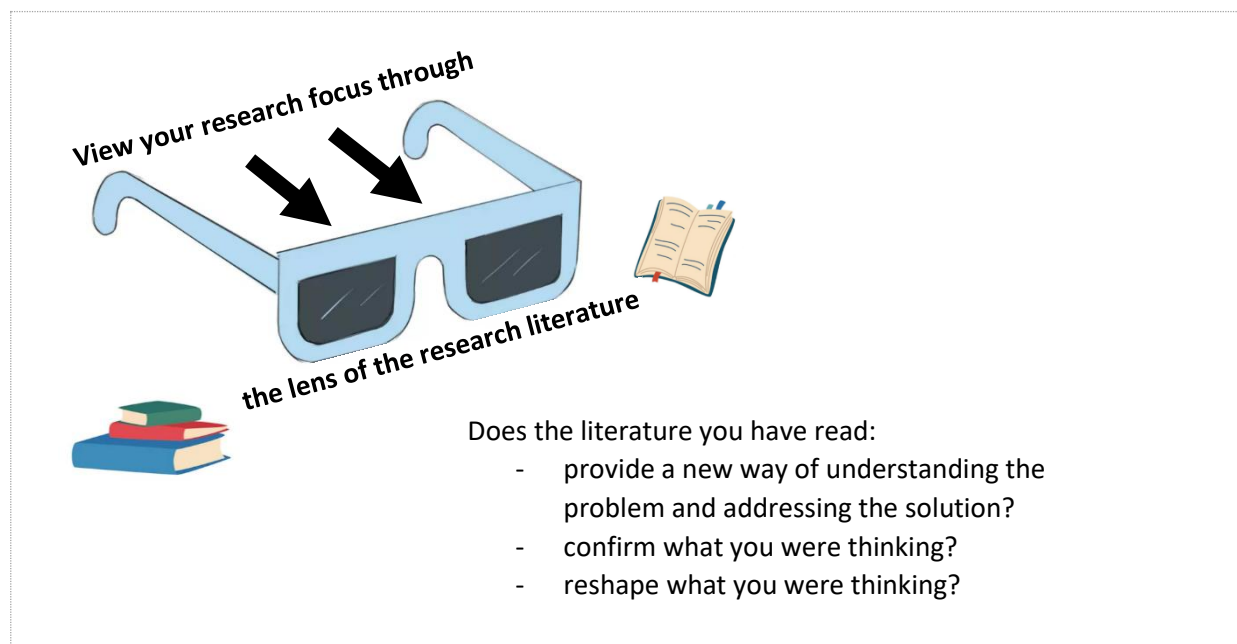


Figure 1- View your research focus through the lens of the research literature. What do you see?

Review, and amend if needed, your research question

Now is a good time to take a moment to review your original research question; considering the literature you have read do you need to reshape the research question(s)?

Gain awareness of the research methods available to you

When planning a research project, it is useful to have an awareness of the range of research methods you may want to utilise. Table 3 provides a brief overview of some commonly used research methods.

Method	Description
Observation	<p>Researchers use observation as a method for generating an account of a situation prior to forming a judgement or conducting some analysis. Observation provides a moment to gaze for longer and describe.</p> <p>Decisions regarding what to observe, need to be shaped by the research question(s).</p> <p>When undertaking observation, it is important to decide whether you will be a participatory observer (actively involved in the</p>

	<p>activity whilst also observing) or non-participatory observer (in the role of observer on the outside of the activity).</p> <p>From a school/college perspective, an observation might form part of a learning walk/deep dive.</p>
Research Journal	<p>A research journal is a space where the researcher records key information about the research focus. A journal can include observations (as described above) and is also likely to include reflections and musings on the topic and possibly initial analysis.</p> <p>They can be a particularly useful way of recording initial notes which can then at a later date be added to, revisited, and developed.</p>
Interviews	<p>Interviews are useful when you want to find out about other people's perspectives regarding the topic of your research. There are three main types of interview: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured.</p> <p>Structured interviews have a series of defined questions which are asked in turn without deviation.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews also generally include a number of pre-defined questions, but do allow for deviation; for example, in the form of follow-up questions.</p> <p>Unstructured interviews are guided by the research focus but do not have a pre-determined set of questions, rather a participant's initial response to a question can guide the trajectory of the interview. In an unstructured interview a researcher may have a set of topics they want to explore rather than a list of predetermined questions.</p> <p>From a school/college perspective an unstructured interview might form part of a learning walk/deep dive.</p>
Focus group	<p>A focus group is rather like an interview (as described above) but rather than being just one interviewee there are a group of people. Like interviews, focus groups can be structured, semi-structured and unstructured.</p> <p>A focus group can be organised formally so that a question is asked and everyone takes it in turn to provide their answer whilst also listening to other's responses. Or a focus group could be more free-flow like a group conversation, with the group members choosing to respond when they have something they wish to communicate.</p>
Questionnaire	<p>The questionnaire, like the interview and focus group, presents a series of questions/statements to participants. The questions are established from the outset; however, branching can be utilised as a way to tailor the questionnaire to the participant and respond to the answers people give. Participants generally provide a written response to the questionnaire or utilise voice recording options.</p>

	<p>Questions can be worded so that short answers are provided, for example Yes/No, or on a scale of 1-5. Or longer more descriptive responses are provided. A questionnaire can be written in such a way that all questions have a short and a long answer, or that just some questions have a short response whilst other questions require a more detailed response.</p>
Analysis of data	<p>Within your setting there will be a number of data points you could consider reviewing as the basis for your research. A few examples are provided below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - baseline data related to the children/young people (this could be numeric or descriptive (i.e., regarding the latter, children/young people’s perceptions) - post intervention data - data relating to time (for example, how much time do children spend with a Teaching Assistant; how much time do teachers and Teaching Assistants have to share information, etc.) - data regarding the continuing professional development staff undertake - numbers of children/young people on the SEND register - attendance data - parental engagement data - etc.
Review of existing materials	<p>Within your setting there will be a wide range of existing materials that you could consider looking at as the basis for your research. A few examples are provided below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SEN Policy - SEN Report - Teachers’ planning - provision maps - one-page pupil profiles - Teaching Assistant job descriptions - CPD materials - Intervention programmes - Guidance documents - etc.

Table 3 – Research Methods

If you do gather data using any of the methods stated in Table 3 (or using any other method), it is important to ensure you gather the right data to answer your research question(s). It is also important that you act responsibly and ethically, ensuring you do not gather excessive data and that you store any data you do gather appropriately. See [Appendix 2](#): Example research question aligned with a range of possible research methods for more information about choosing the appropriate research method(s).

Useful source of further information:

[Research with Children: The Same or Different from Research with Adults?](#)

Step 4: Decide what kind of action you are going to take (direct or enquiry)

There are many different forms of Action Research; however, for the purposes of *Action Research for ISEND* the options have been narrowed to two:

Direct action - where you take action to enact change. Having conducted the 'study-phase', it may be that you have selected an intervention/approach you would like to try; for example, starting a nurture group, embedding the dyslexia friendly school approach in your setting, etc., it also is worth thinking about how you are going to evaluate the effectiveness of the approach.

Enquiry as action – where you take action by surveying the situation to gain information; for example, by using one of the research methods referred to in Table 3.

If you are deciding to conduct **enquiry as action**, your first step might be to analyse existing data, for example, locating your SEN Report or gathering Teaching Assistant timetables. Or it may be that you have the data you need, but it might need compiling; for example, parental engagement data. Or perhaps your research is going to involve locating or developing an observation schedule or questionnaire.

When planning direct action or enquiry as action, it is important to ensure the approach you apply is fit for purpose, this means your research needs to:

1. clearly focus on your research question;
2. avoid the gathering of excessive and superfluous data.

For example, if utilising an observation checklist as part of a learner engagement research project, the checklist needs to direct you towards noticing the learners' responses rather than the teacher's practice.

If planning to use a questionnaire, or observation checklist, etc. you may be able to utilise or adapt a pre-existing proforma. If you are using something other than a Word document/PDF, do consider where the data is going:

- who owns the data?
- where is it being stored?
- can a third party use the data for marketing or other purposes?

You may however prefer to develop your own proforma, whilst this can be time consuming, it could be time well spent if you think you/members of your setting will be able to utilise this resource again in the future. See [Appendix 3](#): for an example questionnaire (research focus: quality first teaching).

Step 5: Consider research ethics (engage with ethics checklist)

When thinking about the ethics of conducting close-to-practice research (such as action research), it is helpful to distinguish between those activities you are doing as part of your day-to-day professional role and those which are additional because of your engagement with Action Research for ISEND.

Activities you are conducting as part of your day-to-day professional role either do not require ethical consent (for example, teaching a maths lesson or embedded a dyslexia friendly ethos into your setting), or have consent built in as part of the process. For example, like gaining parental/carer consent to take children out of school, or requesting permission for an external agency to assess an individual learner.

Research work you are undertaking which is outside of your usual role is likely to require ethical consent; for example, like disseminating your research findings on a publicly available website (even if the findings are anonymised). To support with the process of ensuring your research is ethical it is recommended that you go through the Ethics Checklist (see [Appendix 4: Action Research Ethics Checklist \(study-plan-do-review\)](#)) ensuring that you can state 'yes' or 'not applicable' to each statement, and access the British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines: [Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, fourth edition \(2018\)](#).

When gaining ethical consent to conduct research in your setting, you might find it useful to:

- write a Project Information Sheet (see [Appendix 5: Example Project Information Sheet](#) and [Appendix 6: Project Information Sheet Proforma](#))
- write a Consent Letter (see [Appendix 7: Example/Proforma Consent Letter](#))
- establish an agreed timetable for conducting your research (agree your timetable with key individuals; for example, the Headteacher/Principal and others you will be engaging).

Useful source of further information:

[Research with children: ethics, safety and avoiding harm](#)

Do 1

Step 6: Implement the first plan (either direct action or enquiry as action)

Having completed the Study 1 and Plan 1 actions (including ethics) you are now ready to conduct your research. Remember to store all your data securely, sharing it only with those whom you have permission.

Review 1

Step 7: Review and reflect

Dependent on the data you have gathered, you may choose to review it as you go along, or wait until the first phase of data collection (Plan 1) is complete. In this first review phase the aim is to metaphorically stand-back from the data and take it in as a whole.

Get familiar with the data

Either on your own or with your research team, go through the data you have gathered. The aim here is to get familiar with the data so you know what is there: who said what; what was observed; what was found when reviewing teachers' planning; etc.

What do you notice?

Having completed Step 1, make notes about what you notice about the data (in research terms this stage is often referred to as coding).

- Perhaps you are noticing repeating patterns or one/several point(s) coming through more than once? *The same code(s) coming up multiple times.*
- Perhaps what is noticeable is the lack of a pattern (i.e., lots of variety and many differences)? *Lots of different codes without prevalence or correlation to one another.*
- Perhaps you are noticing several repeating patterns and some/one outlier-point(s). *The same code(s) coming up multiple times with one/some outlier-code(s).*
- Perhaps what is noticeable is a topic or point that does not feature in the data? *An absent code.*

- In relation to the 'study' phase of this project, perhaps you are noticing a correlation (or otherwise) with the research literature/evidence base? *Correlation (or otherwise) of your codes with the research base.*
- *Etc.*

Step 8: Analyse the meaning of the data gathered

Having reviewed the data (as described above), the next step is to think about what it might mean and more specifically, **what is the data telling you about your research question?** At this point it might be helpful to thematically organise your data (i.e., group your codes into themes). There is no one right way to theme your data, it is actually down to your interpretation and whilst this might sound like a weakness of action research it is actually its strength, this is because your professional judgement is valuable, relevant, and meaningful to you and your setting.

You might find that your themes are tightly related to your research question; for example, the three strategies that come out strongly as most supportive of inclusion in PE. Or perhaps your themes concern what practice seems to be: most effective, adequate, in need of development.

Action Research Cycle 2

Study 2

Having completed Action Research Cycle 1, this second cycle of the research process enables you to:

- build on your new, contextualised understanding of the topic;
- build on the success/areas for development you have identified in the first cycle.

In many ways Action Research Cycle 2 (ARC 2) is a refined and developed version of Action Research Cycle 1.

Step 9: Review further literature if required

Based on your review of ARC 1, do you need to conduct a further literature search, or is the literature you have already acquired still relevant to your research trajectory?

Plan 2

Step 10: Based on the 'reflect' phase, refine the research (this may involve revising or developing the research questions) and plan the next actions.

Once you have reviewed the data gathered from ARC 1, the next step is to plan the subsequent stage of your research journey. For example:

- having refined and developed your understanding in ARC 1, it may be that you are still working on the same research question;

or

- it may be that you need to refine your research question slightly;
- or
- possibly you want to take a reformed research trajectory having uncovered something unexpected.

Step 11: Plan 2.2: Decide what kind of action you are going to take (direct or enquiry).

Based on Review 1, decide on what kind of action research you are going to take (direct or enquiry), the choice you make for Plan 2.2 may be different from the choice you made for Plan 1.2.

You may wish to return to Table 3 so as to select a different research method – remember to remain focused on your research question(s) which you may have just updated (see Plan 2.1).

Step 12: Seek any further ethical permissions if needed (engage with ethics checklist).

Now is a good time to review the ethical implications and permissions you initially secured. Do you need to share further information and/or seek consent regarding the methods you will be employing in ARC 2? Refer back to:

- [Appendix 4: Action Research Ethics Checklist \(study-plan-do-review\)](#)
- [Appendix 5: Example Project Information Sheet](#)
- [Appendix 6: Project Information Sheet Proforma](#)
- [Appendix 7: Example/Proforma Consent Letter](#)

Do 2

Step 13: Implement the second plan – (either direct action or enquiry as action).

Having completed the first cycle of ‘Do’, for this second ‘Do’ cycle you can return to the process described in

[Step 6](#): Implement the first plan (either direct action or enquiry as action)

Review 2

Step 14: Review and reflect

Having completed the first cycle of ‘Review’, for this second ‘Review’ cycle you can return to the process described in [Step 7](#): Review and reflect

Step 15: Analyse the meaning of the data gathered

Having completed the first cycle of ‘Review’, for this second ‘Review’ cycle you can return to the process described in [Step 8](#): Analyse the meaning of the data gathered

At this stage you may choose to conduct a third Action Research Cycle (ARC 3) in which case return to the information provided for [Action Research Cycle 1](#), or you might choose to disseminate and report your findings. Of course, you could do both, dissemination and reporting can be as ongoing as Action Research.

Reporting and Dissemination

When reporting on and disseminating your findings remember to maintain the participants' anonymity as defined in your consideration of ethical implications.

Table 4 below details a list of the main elements you could include when reporting and disseminating your research. Whilst all the elements are important it is probably the last two points (which are underlined) that you should dedicate the most time to.

Aim(s) Research Question	Share with your audience the aim(s) of your research and/or your research question. It might be useful to explain why you chose this topic to focus upon.
Evidence base	Share with your audience the evidence base/research literature which informed your research trajectory.
Research team	Check with your co-researchers (i.e. those you planned this research with) if they are happy to be named in the dissemination literature. Do not name your participants, rather refer to them by pseudonyms.
Participants	Explain who participated in your research (remember to uphold the ethical principles you established); avoid naming any individual or presenting data in such a way that it is obvious to whom it refers. If disseminating outside of your own setting, consider whether it is, or is not appropriate to reveal the name of your setting.
Methodology and methods	Explain that the methodology you employed was Action Research and refer to the methods you used (i.e., observation, interview, etc.). If your audience are interested in learning how to set up their own Action Research project, it might be useful to go into some detail about the process of conducting the research.
<u>Findings and analysis</u>	<u>Report on the findings of your research – what did you learn about inclusion and removing barriers for children/young people special educational needs and disabilities.</u> <u>It is often helpful to present your findings in themes and to align your research with the evidence base underpinning your project.</u>
<u>Conclusion</u>	<u>Summarise what you gained from the process of research, and articulate what might other schools/colleges learn from your research?</u>

Table 4 – Reporting on and disseminating your research findings

Data Storage

Following completion of your research do remember to continue storing your data securely, and removing data that you do not have permission to retain.

Appendix 1: How to access freely available research literature

If you are not currently enrolled onto a university course which provides you with access to a library of books and peer reviewed journal articles it can be difficult to get hold of the highest quality research literature.

The information provided in this Appendix is written to help school/college staff locate and access high quality literature focussed on the topic of inclusion and special educational needs and disability.

Open Access

If a journal or article is Open Access it means it is freely available to the general public and does not require a download fee or journal membership.

The journal [Frontiers in Education](#) is an example of a reputable Open Access journal.

Open Access articles are usually marked with an image of an open padlock; for example:



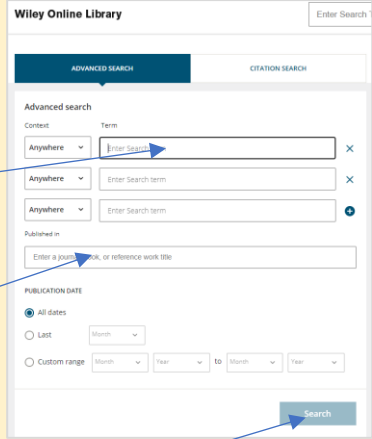
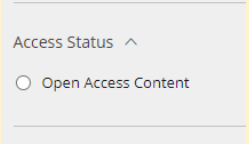
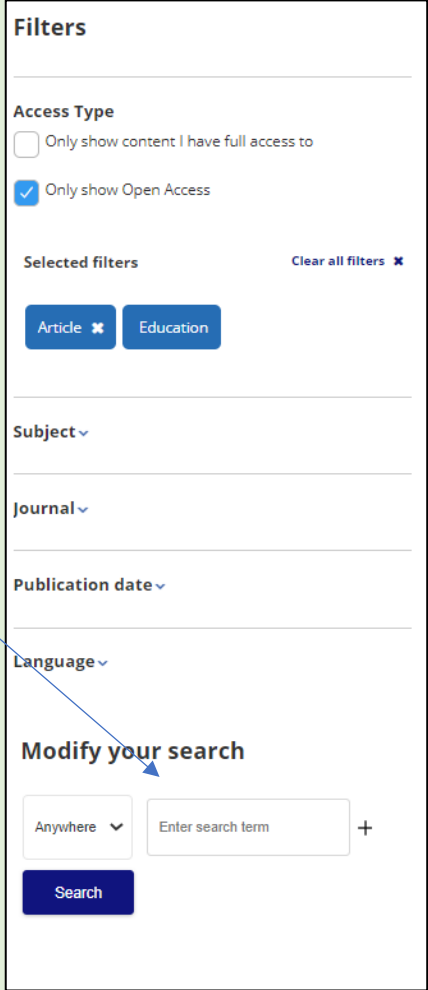
Table 5 details a selection of recommended journals which focus on inclusion, disability and special education, all the journals have some Open Access articles.

If you click the links below you can search each journal in turn for relevant content.

Support for Learning	These four journals are all published by Wiley .
JORSEN (Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs)	
British Journal of Special Education	
British Journal of Learning Disabilities	
International Journal of Inclusive Education	These three journals are all published by Taylor Francis Online .
European Journal of Special Education	
Disability and Society	

Table 5 – List (with weblinks) to journals focussed on ISEND which have Open Access Content.

Rather than look through each individual journal for Open Access content, you can locate all the relevant journal articles published by **Wiley** and **Taylor Francis Online** with a single search of each of their respective databases.

Searching for Open Access Wiley Journals	Searching for Open Access Taylor Francis Online Journals		
<p>Click here to search Wiley’s journals.</p> <p>Enter the topics you want to research into the ‘search terms’ box(es). You can specify where you want the search terms to appear (i.e. ‘anywhere’ in the article, or in the ‘title’, etc.).</p> <p>To search in all four Wiley ISEND journals at the same time, type the names of each journal into the ‘Published in’ box, then press ‘search’.</p> <p>To search for articles in all the journals Wiley publish, leave the ‘Published in’ box blank – this will reveal a wider range of content; however, dependent on your ‘search terms’ the articles may not be about inclusion and/or special educational needs.</p> <p>Click ‘search’.</p> <p>The page which opens (after clicking ‘search’), lists all the available Wiley articles related to your search terms. To identify which are ‘Open Access’ articles, scroll down the left side of the page and select ‘Open Access content’.</p>	 	<p>Click here to search all the education Open Access Taylor Francis Online journals.</p> <p>Enter the topics you want to research into the ‘Enter search term’ box. You can specify where you want the search terms to appear (i.e., ‘anywhere’ in the article or the ‘title’, etc.).</p> <p>Use the ‘+’ symbol to gain more search term boxes.</p> <p>This is a search of all the Open Access education journals Taylor Francis Online publish, so if you want to focus on ISEND then you will need to specify this using appropriate search terms. Hello</p>	



Membership of national bodies

Core membership of the [Chartered College of Teaching](#) provides access to a large database of education journals and to the Chartered College of Teaching journal *Impact*.

nasen's [Premier SEND Support Package](#) provides access to three inclusion/SEND specific journals: Support for Learning, JORSEN, British Journal of Special Education.

Freely available information

The [Education Endowment Foundation](#) and [Whole School SEND](#) (nasen) have a wide range of freely available information for teachers.

In addition to which, your own Local Offer website may be a good source of information, and a general search of the internet will reveal a range of sources, some reputable websites are provided below:

[Council for Disabled Children](#) (which is part of the National Children's Bureau)

[National Autistic Society](#)

[National Children's Bureau](#)

[National Development Team for Inclusion](#) (NDTi)

[National Sensory Impairment Service](#) (NatSIP)

[Speech and Language UK](#)

[What Works in SEND](#)

[Google Scholar](#) and [Google Books](#) both provide access to articles and extracts from published books.

[ResearchGate](#) is a reputable social networking site for researchers. Most publishing academics have a ResearchGate page and will post information about their latest work. If you find an article you like but it is not available, you can contact the author via ResearchGate and they may be able to forward a copy of it to you.



Appendix 2: Example research question aligned with a range of possible research methods

Table 6 details a wide range of different research methods that could be utilised to research the question:

How can we develop practice in my setting to ensure that Teaching Assistants (TAs) are effectively deployed?

It is not recommended that a school/college engage in all the methods detailed in Table 6, rather a setting should select the most appropriate methods related to their understanding of their context.

Possible research approaches

Observation and Unstructured Interview	Conduct a learning walk/deep dive (which includes observation and unstructured interviews) to gain an overall understanding of the TA role in your setting. For example, you might focus on: how are TAs deployed (intervention, small group, 1-1, non-contact preparation time)?; which pupils are TAs working with?; what is the impact of TA work on pupil learning?
Research Journal	Visit each intervention group led by a TA and record in your research journal information about the efficacy and impact of the intervention.
Interviews	Using a semi-structured interview gain an understanding of the teachers' and TAs' views regarding TA deployment, preparedness and practice.
Focus group	Using a focus group gain an understanding from the learners about what TA support they find most useful and what could be developed.
Questionnaire	Using a questionnaire , gain an understanding of the teachers' and TAs' views regarding TA deployment, preparedness and practice. Provide relevant TA training (focussed on pedagogy) – utilise a pre and post training questionnaire with TAs to evaluate the effectiveness of the training.
Analysis of data	Gain a clear understanding of the proportions of time children/young people on the SEND register are spending with TAs and teachers. Analyse this data alongside pupil progress data. Gain an understanding of the progress made by pupils in intervention sessions and whether teachers utilise this information in their lesson planning. Gain an understanding of the time available for teachers and TAs to share information , discuss planning and issues relating to pedagogy. Review the training completed by, available to, and requested by TAs; compare this list with the needs of pupils in your school. Review the training available for teachers to deploy TAs in pedagogical roles.
Review of existing materials	Review teachers' planning documents , focus on the nature and clarity of TA deployment. Review TA job descriptions in your setting (focus specifically on the pedagogical element).

Table 6: Possible school/college based approaches to conducting research into the efficacy of TA deployment (adapted from Wharton, J., Codina, G., Middleton, T., & Esposito, R., (2019) *SENCO Induction Pack: Supporting you at the start of your journey*, Tamworth: NASEN [available at] [SENCO Induction Pack: revised edition | SendGateway](#)

Appendix 3: Example questionnaire (quality first teaching)

See the **Action Research: Templates Resource** to access this example questionnaire as a Microsoft Word document.

Survey for: Headteachers, members of the Senior Leadership team, Teachers, Higher Level Teaching Assistants, Teaching Assistants.

Your name: *Optional*

1. How would you define quality first teaching?

<i>Space for free text</i>

2. Do you perceive there to be a link between quality first teaching and inclusion?

Scale 1-5				
1= no	2= not really	3= somewhat	4= in the main	5= definitely
<i>Space for free text</i>				

3. Do you perceive the embedding of quality first teaching to be an important school priority?

Scale 1-5				
1= no	2= not really	3= somewhat	4= in the main	5= definitely
<i>Space for free text</i>				

4. Reflecting on your own practice/or practice within your setting: what quality first teaching strategies do you perceive to be most effective **and** used most frequently?

<i>Space for free text</i>

5. Do you perceive there to be any barriers/constraints to implementing quality first teaching within your setting?

Scale 1-5				
1= a considerable number	2= quite a few	3= some	4= not really	5= no
<i>Space for free text</i>				

6. Do you perceive there to be enablers and opportunities that facilitate quality first teaching within your setting?

Scale 1-5				
1= no	2= not really	3= somewhat	4= in the main	5= definitely

Space for free text

7. Do you have school document(s) which refer to quality first teaching?

Yes	No	Not sure (I'd need to check)
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If 'no' or 'not sure' go to question a.

If 'yes' go to question b.

a. Do you think the setting should refer to quality first teaching somewhere within its documentation? Please explain your answer.

Space for free text

b. Do you think the document(s) in your setting which reference quality first teaching are appropriate/could be developed further? Please explain your answer.

Space for free text

8. If quality first teaching was to be developed further in your setting, what do you think the focus should be?

Space for free text

9. Would you find it useful to engage in further training about quality first teaching?

Yes	No	Not sure
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Please explain your answer:

Space for free text

Appendix 4: Action Research Ethics Checklist (study-plan-do-review)

See the **Action Research: Templates Resource** to access this checklist as a Microsoft Word document.

To ensure you have developed an ethically appropriate research project check that you can select 'yes' or not applicable (NA) to each statement below.

STUDY: Evidence base

The researcher(s) have ensured this project is underpinned by a credible evidence base and/or appropriate research literature.	Yes/No/NA
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PLANNING THE RESEARCH: Information sharing

The researcher(s) have shared information that clearly explains to the Headteacher/Principal, relevant school/college staff, and relevant parents/carers:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the aims, purpose and methods of this research. 	Yes/No/NA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the timeframe for conducting the research (who, what, when, where, how). 	Yes/No/NA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the way that data gathered for this project will be stored. 	Yes/No/NA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the length of time that data will be stored. 	Yes/No/NA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> whom the data will be shared with. 	Yes/No/NA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the names of the staff leading this research. 	Yes/No/NA
The researcher(s) have shared accessible information about this research project with relevant children/young people?	Yes/No/NA

PLANNING THE RESEARCH: Informed consent

The researcher(s) have gained the consent of the Headteacher/Principal, relevant school/college staff, and relevant parents/carers to conduct this research?	Yes/No/NA
Using an accessible format, the researcher(s) have gained the consent of the children/young people to conduct this research?	Yes/No/NA

DOING THE RESEARCH: Data gathering

The researcher(s) have ensured the data collection methods used in this research are adequate and not excessive?	Yes/No/NA
The focus of this research is driven by a desire to improve the outcomes of children with SEND, honesty, transparency, and integrity are of paramount concern, as is the wellbeing of all those involved?	Yes/No/NA
Participants' right to withdraw from the research is embedded as a principle. The date from which the research will be published (and participants cannot be guaranteed complete withdraw) will be clearly communicated by the researcher(s).	Yes/No/NA
The researcher(s) have appropriate processes for storing and sharing the data (all data that identifies individuals will be stored in a password protected system, or in a locked cupboard).	Yes/No/NA

REVIEWING THE RESEARCH: Analysis

The researcher(s) will only share data which identifies others, in accordance with their general professional standards.	Yes/No/NA
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REVIEWING THE RESEARCH: Dissemination

At the point of research dissemination, all data which identifies others, including an organisation such as a school/college will be anonymised (unless specifically asked not to do so, or with the explicit permission of the settings Headteacher/Principal).	Yes/No/NA
At the point of dissemination, the researcher(s) will utilise respectful language.	Yes/No/NA
The researcher(s) have secured consent to disseminate this research from the Headteacher/Principal, relevant school/college staff, and relevant parents/carers.	Yes/No/NA

Appendix 5: Example Project Information Sheet

Action Research: Quality First Teaching (QFT) Project Information Sheet

Project Aim

The aim of the project is to gain a greater understanding of Quality First Teaching (QFT) and the development of it in the City Secondary School.

The Research Team

This project is led by the SENCO, English Co-ordinator, and Maths Co-ordinator at the City Secondary School (see next page for more details). The project is being conducted with support of the school's Headteacher Mr Brown and the senior leadership team.

Arrangements

This Action Research project is being conducted as part of the National Association for Special Educational Needs (nasen) [‘Universal SEND Services’](#) programme. Funded by the Department for Education (DfE) the research team will be taking part in six training sessions and disseminating the research findings.

This Action Research project has been divided into two phases:

- Phase 1 – the survey
- Phase 2 – actions post survey

Working together, the research team have developed an initial survey which focusses on staff opinions about quality first teaching. Following completion and analysis of the survey, the information gathered will be used as the basis for further actions that aim to share, consolidate, and enhance quality first teaching in our school.

Phase 1 – Survey

In phase 1 of the research (Spring term), a Quality First Teaching 365-Survey link will be sent to all senior leaders, teachers, and teaching assistants in the school. It is anticipated the survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete; it is your choice whether you complete the survey anonymously or add your name. The research team are keen to hear your open and honest opinions, the information you provide will not be linked to the school's performance management processes. The survey link will be sent to you on the week beginning 30th January, and will remain open for two weeks (the survey will close on the 13th February). The research team will review the responses together and then present an overview of the survey findings at the next available Senior Leadership team meeting. The survey findings will then be utilised as the basis for our Spring Inset day.

Phase 2 – Share, Consolidate, Enhance

Following the outcome of the Spring Inset day, the research team will work with the school to share best practice, consolidate, and enhance our quality first teaching offer. It is likely that additional data will be gathered during this phase of the Action Research Project; at this point, further information about data gathering and data use will be communicated with you.

Dissemination

A key component of this Action Research Project is dissemination and evaluation. The anonymised findings of our research will be shared in three ways:

1. Internally within our school
2. With one other school
3. As a written case study with accompanying video on a publicly available website.

As part of this project, you will be asked to complete an evaluation form. The data you provide in this evaluation will not include your name, and whilst you will be asked to include the school's name this information will only be used for the purposes of checking the dissemination activities 1 and 2 (listed above) have taken place.

The evaluation data gathered will be utilised by the University of Derby as the basis for examining the efficacy of Action Research as a tool for improving the outcomes of children with special educational needs and disabilities. This anonymised data which will include no identifying features (i.e. no school names) will be shared with nasen who may choose to share it with the Department for Education.

Using the Data

The data gathered in Phases 1 and 2 of the research project will be discussed by the research team, the school's senior leadership team and shared with the school. For the purposes of developing the project and gaining support, anonymised forms of the data may also be shared at the 6 twilight Action Research sessions. These sessions are led by Dr Geraldene Codina at the University of Derby and are attended by up to 30 staff from other schools/colleges who are participating in this project.

In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (2018) all data will be: stored securely in password protected files; excessive quantities of data will not be gathered; participants have the right to ask for any data-set where they are named to be deleted at any time; participants can withdraw their active participation from the project at any time.

The date from which the research is to be anonymously published will be clearly communicated by the researcher(s). Data will be retained for a minimum of three years.

The research Team

Mrs Sarah Smith SENCO City School s.smith@cityschool.uk	Mr Abdul Kumar English Co-ordinator City School a.kumar@cityschool.uk	Ms Lola Musa Maths Co-ordinator City School l.musa@cityschool.uk
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Appendix 6: Project Information Sheet Proforma

See the **Action Research: Templates Resource** to proforma as a Microsoft Word document.

Action Research: **Add your Research Focus** Project Information Sheet

Project Aim

What is the aim of your project, or your research question?

The Research Team

Who is leading the project and who are the research team (provide their contact details on the following page)?

Arrangements

This Action Research project is being conducted as part of the National Association for Special Educational Needs (nasen) '[Universal SEND Services](#)' programme. Funded by the Department for Education (DfE) the research team will be taking part in 6 training sessions and disseminating the research findings.

Provide an overview of your Action Research project – how are you planning to conduct this action research project?

Phase 1

Provide information about what you are doing in Plan 1.

- *Make sure you tell participants what their involvement will be, how long it will take, and what you will be doing with any information you gather.*
- *We recommend making a statement about the data gathered not being linked to the school's performance management processes.*

Phase 2

The nature of the Action Research cycle means you might not know exactly what you will be doing in plan 2 of your project. Share with participants whatever information is known and explain you will provide an update at the point when you are working on Plan 2.

Dissemination

A key component of this Action Research Project is dissemination and evaluation. The anonymised findings of our research will be shared in three ways:

1. Internally within our school
2. With one other school
3. As a written case study with accompanying video on a publicly available website.

As part of this project, you will be asked to complete an evaluation form. The data you provide in this evaluation will not include your name, and whilst you will be asked to include your school's name this information will only be used for the purposes of checking the dissemination activity 1 and 2 (listed above) have taken place.

The evaluation data gathered will be utilised by the University of Derby as the basis for examining the efficacy of Action Research as a tool for improving the outcomes of children with special educational needs and disabilities. This anonymised data which will include no identifying features (i.e. no school names) will be shared with nasen who may choose to share it with the Department for Education.

Using the Data

The data gathered in Phases 1 and 2 of the research project will be discussed by the research team, the school's senior leadership team and shared with the school. For the purposes of developing the project and gaining support, anonymised forms of the data may also be shared at the 6 twilight Action Research sessions. These sessions are led by Dr Geraldene Codina at the University of Derby and are attended by up to 30 staff from other schools/colleges who are participating in this project.

In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (2018) all data will be: stored securely in password protected files; excessive quantities of data will not be gathered; participants have the right to ask for any data-set where they are named to be deleted at any time; participants can withdraw their active participation from the project at any time.

The date from which the research is to be anonymously published will be clearly communicated by the researcher(s). Data will be retained for a minimum of three years.

The research Team

Name		
Role		
Email		

Appendix 7: Example/Proforma Consent Letter

See the **Action Research: Templates Resource** to access this proforma as a Microsoft Word document.

Action Research: [your research focus] Consent Form

Please read the following and use 'yes' or 'no' to indicate whether you agree or disagree respectively.

I have been provided with information about this research project which I understand.	Yes/No
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction.	Yes/No
I understand that I can ask for all data in which I am named to be removed at any time.	Yes/No
I understand that I can withdraw my participation from this project at any time.	Yes/No
I understand how the data gathered from this project will be used.	Yes/No
<p><i>Delete as appropriate</i></p> <p>I agree to take part in this Action Research project</p> <p>I do not agree to take part in this Action Research project</p> <p>Name of participant.....</p> <p>Date.....</p>	

Once complete, please return this consent form to [your email address]