

Section 8: Working with other professionals and other sources of support and information

This section of the toolkit is about working with professionals beyond the setting and making use of sources of information and support available locally.

It is important because there may be a range of professionals whom early years settings might come into contact with in their day to day work with children with SEND. The collaboration between these professionals and parents is essential to improving outcomes for individual children.

Practitioners must consider whether a child may have a special educational need or disability, which requires specialist support. They should link with, and help families to access, relevant services from other agencies as appropriate.

DfE (2014) *Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage*, para 1.6

Involving specialists

Where a child continues to make less than expected progress, despite evidence-based support and interventions that are matched to the child's area of need, practitioners should consider involving appropriate specialists..... who may be able to identify effective strategies, equipment, programmes or other interventions to enable the child to make progress towards the desired learning and development outcomes. The decision to involve specialists should be taken with the child's parents.

DfE and DH (2015) *SEN and disability code of practice; 0-25 years*, para 5.48

The Code of Practice makes it clear that whilst all practitioners are responsible for working with children with SEN, it is the role of the SENCO to co-ordinate the support across the setting and specifically to *liaise with professionals or agencies beyond the setting* (Code of Practice, para 5.54).

For children identified as having SEN, the cycle of *assess, plan, do, review* may indicate the need for additional input from those with more specialist expertise. This may include more specialist assessment of the child's needs to make sure that provision is matched to the child's needs as well as advice on *effective strategies, equipment, programmes or other interventions to enable the child to make progress towards the desired ...outcomes*.

In identifying a child as needing SEN support, the early years practitioner, working with the setting SENCO and the child's parents, will have carried out an analysis of the child's needs. This initial assessment should be reviewed regularly to ensure that support is matched to need. Where there is little or no improvement in the child's progress, more specialist assessment may be called for from specialist teachers or from health, social services or other agencies beyond the setting. Where professionals are not already working with the setting, the SENCO should contact them, with the parents' agreement.

DfE and DH (2015) *SEN and disability code of practice; 0-25 years*, para 5.39

The early years SENCO would normally contact the external specialist, with the parents' agreement. Different professionals provide support in different ways: some professionals will work with staff, some with children directly; many will observe children in the setting and talk to staff as part of their assessments; some may be able to provide training for staff; some will model strategies or demonstrate how to best use resources to support individual children.

The local authority should ensure there is sufficient expertise amongst local providers to support children with SEN.

To fulfil their role in identifying and planning for the needs of children with SEN, local authorities should ensure that there is sufficient expertise and experience amongst local early years providers to support children with SEN.

DfE and DH (2015) *SEN and disability code of practice; 0-25 years*, para 5.55

The Local Offer

Local Authorities must publish a 'local offer' of information about the provision available for children in their area who have SEN or disabilities. This information is across education, health and social care. Key elements, relevant to the early years are summarised below (drawn from chapter 4 of the Code of Practice).

The local offer must include a description of the provision that the LA expects to be available from providers of all relevant early years education.

It must also include information about the support available across education, health and social care services for disabled children and children with SEN, including information about:

- services assisting providers to support young children with medical conditions;
- childcare for disabled children and children with SEN;
- Information, Advice and Support Services: services providing parents and children with information, advice and support on SEN and disability;
- support groups who can support parent carers of disabled children.

The *local offer* should also include information about:

- provision such as Area SENCOs, SEN support or learning support services, sensory support services or specialist teachers, therapies such as speech and language therapy;
- support available to parents to aid their child's development at home, including such services as Portage;
- arrangements for identifying and assessing children's needs in the early years;
- arrangements for reviewing children's progress including health and development reviews between the ages of 2 and 3;
- the LA's arrangements for providing top-up funding for children with high needs;
- the arrangements for EHC needs assessments and plans.

The local offer is a valuable resource for practitioners and a way of signposting parents to available support. It will be important for the setting SENCO to become familiar with the local offer for their area.

Professionals who may be in your support and advice network

Area SENCO

Local authorities often make use of Area SENCOs to provide advice and guidance to early years providers on the development of inclusive early years environments. Other titles may be used for those fulfilling this role, for example, Inclusion adviser.

Typically, the role of the Area SENCO includes:

- providing advice and practical support to early years providers about approaches to identification, assessment and intervention within the SEN Code of Practice
- providing day-to-day support for setting-based SENCOs in ensuring arrangements are in place to support children with SEN
- strengthening the links between the settings, parents, schools, social care and health services
- developing and disseminating good practice
- supporting the development and delivery of training both for individual settings and on a wider basis
- developing links with existing SENCO networks to support smooth transitions to school nursery and reception classes, and
- informing parents of and working with local impartial Information, Advice and Support Services, to promote effective work with parents of children in the early years

DfE and DH (2015) *SEN and disability code of practice; 0-25 years*, para 5.56

There are other professionals who may work directly with children or provide advice and guidance to settings and to families in the early years:

Specialist teachers/Advisory teachers

Teachers who can give advice and support on children with particular needs, for example, children with a hearing or vision impairment. Some are involved in direct teaching whilst others fulfill an advisory role.

Speech and Language Therapist

Speech and language therapists work with children who have difficulties with speech, language and communication or with eating, drinking and swallowing. They work with children in clinics, schools and other settings and provide advice to families and those working with children on a daily basis.

Health Visitor

Health visitors are experienced and qualified registered nurses or midwives. They work in the community to promote good health and prevent illness. They visit people at home, especially new mothers and children, provide physical and developmental checks, may run clinics on specific issues, such as sleep, and can provide or access more specialist support.

Educational Psychologist

An Educational Psychologist (EP) provides specialist assessment of learning difficulties. EPs provide advice on teaching and management strategies and behaviour management. The local authority must seek psychological advice and information from an educational psychologist if they carry out an Education, Health and Care needs assessment.

Portage home visitor / worker

Portage provides planned home-based educational support for pre-school children with special educational needs.

Settings may also link with a range of other professionals such as community paediatricians, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, clinical psychologists, social workers.

Getting the most from working with other professionals

General points

If you have a regular group of professionals who work with your setting, make sure that they are introduced on your notice board and in your prospectus.

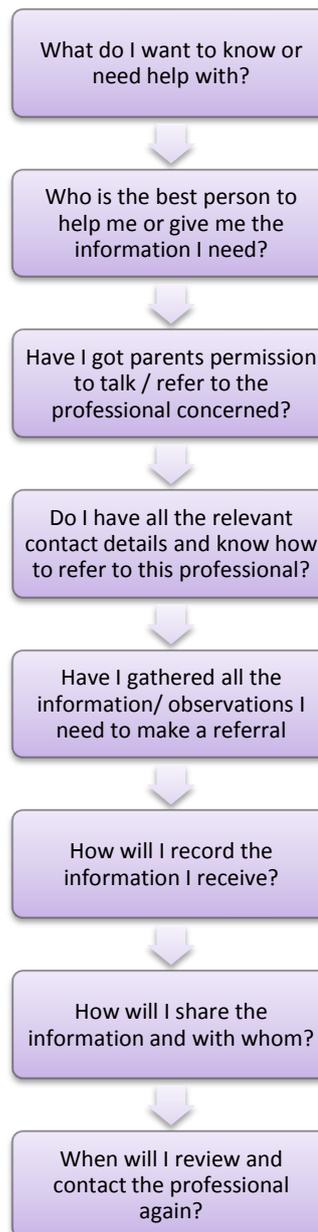
Make a directory of their contact details – this makes it easier when arranging meetings and sending letters/emails.

Take note of their working days and hours, so you don't waste time ringing on a day they are not at work.

Find out their preferred method of communication - emails are often convenient for enquiries if the person is office-based.

If speaking on the phone, prepare a list of questions or information you would like before you speak to them. This will help to keep the conversation focussed and ensure that you don't forget the point of your call.

Be prepared to be persistent and patient.



Information and support beyond the local area

There are many organisations that provide reliable and up-to-date information for those working with disabled children, children with special educational needs, and their families. Some offer advice and support specific to an aspect of special educational needs, others offer more general information. The links and information below are provided as suggestions rather than being an exhaustive list. Many organisations have freely downloadable information and resources. You may find it useful to sign up to newsletters and updates from organisations that are of particular interest.

PLEASE NOTE websites and links change over time. If the link provided does not work, use a reliable search engine to find what you are looking for.

Council for Disabled Children

Information and resources relating to disabled children, young people and their families and host to materials from other SEND partners: www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk

Foundation Years

A one stop shop for information and news in relation to the early years and childcare sector. A specific section for resources: www.foundationyears.org.uk

Early Support Materials

Resources and information developed as part of the Early Support programme including the Early Support developmental journals: www.ncb.org.uk/early-support/resources

Relevant to particular groups of children

Autism Education Trust

Information about training, early years autism standards, early years autism competency framework: www.aettraininghubs.org.uk/early-years/

Communication Trust

Information about children's communication development and how to identify and support children with speech, language and communication needs.

www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

ICAN

Information, resources and training to support children's communication development.

www.ican.org.uk

Talking point

Talking Point provides information on children's communication, a database of resources, a progress checker for language development, and a searchable map for services in your area.

www.talkingpoint.org.uk

The National Portage Association

National Portage Association supports Portage Services and promotes service standards and training. <http://www.hub.portage.org.uk>

CEAS

Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) is an organisation funded by the Ministry of Defence to provide information and support to Service families on all aspects of the education of their children in the UK and overseas.

<https://www.gov.uk/childrens-education-advisory-service>

For parents in particular:

Information, Advice and Support Services Network

The Information, Advice and Support Services Network (IASS Network) supports and promotes the work of Information, Advice and Support (IAS) Services across England. Local IAS services can be identified through the IASSN website: <http://www.iassnetwork.org.uk/>

Contact a Family

Wide ranging information and advice for parents and practitioners: www.cafamily.org.uk

NNPCF

The National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) promotes good practice in parent participation and supports local parent carer forums across England.

<http://www.nnpcf.org.uk/>.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) offers confidential advice, support and information on health-related matters. They provide a point of contact for patients, their families and their carers. The website provides a facility for finding PALS in your local hospital. <http://www.nhs.uk/chq/Pages/1082.aspx?CategoryID=68>

Particularly focused on professional support and professional development

Inclusion development Programme

On line resources developed to support early years providers and schools to support: children with speech language and communication difficulties; children on the autism spectrum; and children with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (now referred to as social, emotional and mental health difficulties): www.idponline.org.uk/

NASEN

SEND Gateway: an online portal providing access to information, resources and training for meeting the needs of children with special educational needs. Includes a specific search facility for early years: www.sendgateway.org.uk

Advanced training

Online training materials for autism; dyslexia; speech, language and communication; emotional, social and behavioural difficulties; moderate learning difficulties.

www.advanced-training.org.uk/

SSAT

Online training materials and downloadable fact sheets and briefing packs in relation to children with complex learning difficulties and disabilities. complexld.ssatrust.org.uk

NatSIP

NatSIP, the **N**ational **S**ensory **I**mpairment **P**artnership is a partnership of organisations working together to improve outcomes for children and young people with sensory impairment. www.natsip.org.uk

pdnet

pdnet provides support for professionals in education who promote positive outcomes for children with a physical disability. <http://www.pdnet.org.uk/home>