

# Information on supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Somerset

## For parent carers and practitioners

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**For more on anything covered in this pack please contact;**

**Somerset Direct** 0300 123 2224

**Somerset Choices** [www.somersetchoices.org.uk](http://www.somersetchoices.org.uk)

**SENDIAS** [www.somersetsend.org.uk](http://www.somersetsend.org.uk) or telephone 01823 355578

**If you would like this in an alternative format**



# 1. Support for children and young people with SEND

In autumn 2014, the way children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities are supported changed. These changes have an official name - **the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Reforms**. They were introduced as part of a law called the **Children and Families Act 2014**. When we talk about Special Educational Needs and Disability, we use the shortened version, 'SEND'.

Children and young people with SEND, and their families, are at the heart of decisions that affect them. The hope for children and young people with SEND is the same as for all children and young people – that they achieve well in their early years, at school and in college, and lead happy and fulfilled lives.

**Those who work in the education, health and social care sectors, and children, young people and their parent carers achieve this by working better together and:**

- supporting children and young people to work towards their dreams and goals, plan for the future, and prepare them for adulthood.
- all being involved in making choices and decisions about SEND services
- providing information on services, support and social activities for children and young people with SEND, through the Local Offer within Somerset Choices Children and Families

**[www.somersetchoices.org.uk](http://www.somersetchoices.org.uk)**

There is a Code of Practice which gives the details of what must and should be done , and who must follow this guidance. There is specific information in the Code for early years settings, schools and colleges , local authorities and health.

Most children and young people with SEND will have their needs met within their local mainstream early years setting, school or college. All settings should use their best endeavours to make sure that the special educational provision required, is provided.

Some children and young people (0-25 years) may require an Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment (see insert 10). When we talk about Education, Health and Care needs assessments and plans we use the shortened version “EHC” assessment and “EHC plan”

**For more information** about information, support and advice services, please see insert 13 in this pack or for more information visit [www.somersetchoices.org.uk](http://www.somersetchoices.org.uk) and search using key words “SEND Legislation” for general information, and “SENDIAS” for the main information and support service.

## 2. Somerset Choices - The Local Offer

Somerset Choices is a website for children, young people and families where you can search for information and advice, services, local and national support groups and events. It is a website full of services expected to be available for local children and young people with SEND aged 0 to 25 years. This is the Somerset SEND local offer website. Every local authority must publish their local offer for SEND.

It is there to help families, individuals, groups, practitioners and organisations find information so that they have more choice and control over the support and services available. The website will enable them to find out what is available locally and where to go for the right service, at the right time, and in the right place.

In Somerset, the Local Offer can be found by visiting **[www.somersetchoices.org.uk](http://www.somersetchoices.org.uk)**  
It has been designed by children, young people, their parent carers and those working in Education, Health and Social Care. Somerset Choices covers two service areas, Children and Families and Adult Services and Support.

The Local Offer will make it easier to find up-to-date information on what you need to know, and when you need to know it. It will show you the nearest and most suitable services, let you give feedback or get in touch.

### **It covers information and services available within:**

- education - nurseries, playgroups, schools and colleges as well as support services for example, educational psychologists, early years and early intervention workers.
- health - local doctors, paediatricians, school nurses and therapists.
- care - short breaks and children's disability services.
- information and services in the voluntary and private sector across Somerset.

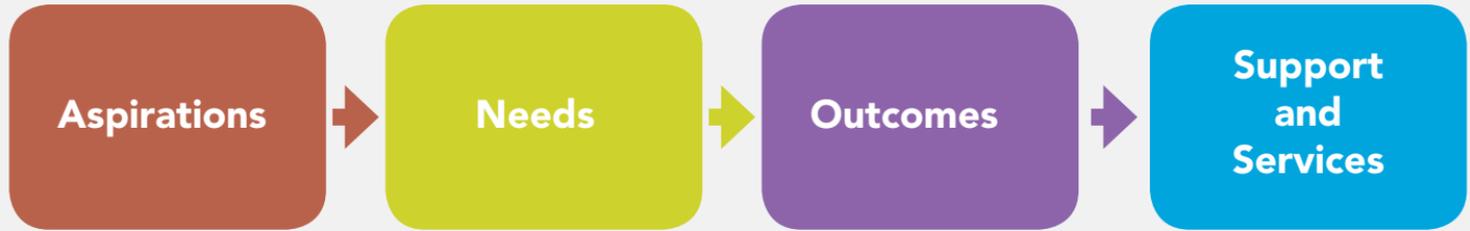
It is intended to help you make informed choices about things that are important to children and young people, such as; where to live, transport, social activities, options after school, continuing education, supported employment, traineeship, and apprenticeship. Somerset Choices also gives information on making the transition from services provided for children to those for adults.

Somerset Choices depends upon the support of all young people, parent carers, and those workers involved in SEND services to use it, share it and give feedback on it so it can be made even better. Somerset Choices will help you navigate the range of information, support and services available in Somerset.

**For more information** visit [www.somersetchoices.org.uk](http://www.somersetchoices.org.uk)

### 3. Outcomes and aspirations

Outcomes mean different things to different people. For children and young people with SEND, outcomes are about working together with the people who support them to decide on shared targets or goals that will make a difference and enable them to achieve the best they can.



An outcome is something that happens or changes in a child or young person's life, what we might call a 'result'. Outcomes should be Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic and have a Timescale (SMART).

The term "golden thread" is often used to describe the important links between a child or young person's aspirations, needs and outcomes to the support they receive. If you look at someone's aspiration you will be able to see what support they need to enable them to reach it. The boxes above illustrate how you find out what support and services a child or young person needs.

## **Improving Outcomes for children and young people with SEND is important to enable them to;**

- become what they want to be
- become more independent
- take ownership of their lives

Person centred planning puts children and young people at the centre of their own future planning. It helps them to participate in decisions about their SEND needs and support. All children and young people have hopes and dreams for the future. Person centred planning helps children and young people to think about what they want now and in the future; helping children and young people to identify what is important to them, and what is important for them.

Person centred planning helps children and young people to share their thoughts, wishes and dreams and to be listened to. They should take part in setting realistic and achievable goals for their future. It's about getting the best help for children and young people from family, friends and everyone who supports them in education, health and social care.

## 4. Early Help- getting the right help at the right time

Early Help is about supporting children, young people and their families as soon as possible to identify and respond to problems- at any point in a child's life. Early Help covers children from 0-19 years and up to 25 if they have a special educational need or disability.

Early Help is everyone's responsibility. By supporting children and families at the right time, the overall wellbeing and quality of life of all children, young people and their families in Somerset will improve.

The Somerset Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) has launched new guidance for professionals and managers to make sure help is available for children, young people and families as soon as it's needed. The guidance aims to make existing thresholds of need clearer for professionals so they can identify if a child or family might need some help and support. Understanding when children and families might need support can ensure they are given the right service, in the right place, at the right time. The new guidance can be found by visiting [www.somerset.gov.uk/sscbthresholds](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/sscbthresholds) and the Early Help Assessment Co-ordinator can be contacted on **01823 355803**.

Achieving the seven improvement programmes from Somerset Childrens and Young People's Plan are closely linked to Early Help.

**To make this a success, everyone who supports children, young people and families will need to work together towards a shared set of values and behaviours:**

- we will safeguard children and take early action when we identify a concern.
- we will listen to and act on the voice of the child.
- we build trusting relationship with families helping them to find creative solutions to meet their needs and achieve their outcomes.
- we aim to get families back on their feet with new skills to be able to help themselves in future and not need to come back for more support.
- we will share appropriate information with other partners in the interests of achieving better outcomes for children.
- we will work with partners to support families' needs.
- we record and use data to monitor progress of families, show we are making a difference and use information collectively to make better decisions and target resources. This means we will be continuously improving our own practice and the work of the partnership.

**For more information** search using key words 'Early Help' on [www.somersetchoices.org.uk](http://www.somersetchoices.org.uk)

## 5. Preparing for Adulthood

It is important that young people achieve their aspirations, hopes and dreams, and develop successful outcomes throughout their lives. Young people with special educational needs and disabilities should be supported to achieve their own aspirations in life by:

- education professionals (for example schools)
- health professionals (for example nurses)
- social care professionals (for example social workers)
- local authorities (for example Somerset County Council)

They should start preparing for life as an adult at the earliest opportunity.

There is an organisation called Preparing for Adulthood, it provides knowledge and support to all local authorities and their partners, including families and young people, so they can ensure young people with SEND achieve paid work, independent living, good health and community inclusion as they move into adulthood.

## These key areas are important in helping young people realise their full potential:

- 1. employment** - develop a young person's experience, skills and qualifications to help them to be successful in paid employment in their adult life. Young people with SEND can be supported through pathways to employment that include; higher education, work-based learning, apprenticeships, traineeships or supported internships.
- 2. independent living** - enable young people to have choice and control over their lives and the support they get. For example, their accommodation and living choices including supported living.
- 3. good health** - helping young people to be healthy in their adult lives.
- 4. community inclusion** - encourage young people to develop friendships, supportive relationships and enable them to contribute to their local community.

**For more information** on Preparing for Adulthood visit [www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk](http://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk) or search using key words 'Preparing for adult life' on [www.somersetchoices.org.uk](http://www.somersetchoices.org.uk)

## 6. Working with children and young people to have their voices heard

It is important for children and young people to participate as fully as possible in decisions. For children and young people, participation and engagement means being involved in making choices and decisions about things that can affect them.

It is important because it can make services better by letting the people that use them say what they need and want. This can also have a lot of added benefits for young people as it can help improve their self-esteem, confidence and give them the opportunity to learn useful skills for later life.

### **Practitioners can involve children and young people in a lot of different ways:**

- setting up groups to ask young people their ideas
- creating surveys and questionnaires that are easy to read and accessible for young people
- communicating and asking young people what they think in a variety of ways, on the phone, online and in person

### **Participation can be done at different levels and on a wide range of different subjects,**

- strategic level, for example creating brand-new services with young people involved from the very start

- group level, for example a group of young people discussing a new youth group
- an individual level, for example a young person commenting on the services they receive

**It is easy to involve young people, but it takes time and effort. Practitioners may need to do things a little differently. Here young people share some top tips\* to working with them:**

- respect us
- involve us from the start
- listen to us
- make it fun!
- be open and honest with us
- involve all of us
- give us time
- make sure we get something out of it
- support us to make our own decisions

To find out how to put this in to practice or for more information on engagement and participation visit **[www.participationworks.org.uk](http://www.participationworks.org.uk)**

\*Top tips taken from Participation Works

## 7. Working with parent carers to have their voices heard

Children, young people and parent carers should be involved in decision making about the support and services they use. It is very important to make sure that families and young people “have their say” about the services on offer which they may want to use.

Parent participation means parents and professionals working together to improve services and the delivery of services so that they better meet families’ needs. By listening to parent carers we can identify what works well, what needs improving and what’s missing - typically referred to as ‘gaps in provision’.

**There are many different ways of working in partnership with parent carers. Working with parent carers can be very rewarding. Five good reasons for working together with parent carers:**

1. good communication with parent carers puts the child or young person at the centre of support and services so their needs, dreams and aspirations can be best met
2. parent carers know their children best and can widen practitioners’ understanding and knowledge of individual children and their community
3. working together increases the chances of using consistent approaches across all support and services when parents and professionals work together

4. by recognising each other's expert knowledge, informed decisions are made which make the best use of people's time and money
5. parent carers only need to tell their stories once

Somerset Parent Carer Forum (SPCF) is one way parent carers in Somerset can make their voices heard. Their activities are carried out for the benefit of parent carers and families of children and young people with SEND in Somerset. The work they do is focused in the following areas:

- enabling families to have a voice
- enabling families to support themselves
- enabling families to support each other

Somerset Parent Carer Forum works with Somerset County Council, the National Health Service, Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group and the National Network of Parent Carer Forums to make sure parent carer views are heard and understood.

To find out more visit **[www.somersetpcf.org.uk](http://www.somersetpcf.org.uk)**

## 8. Early Years - support for early years' children aged 0 to 5 years

Support for early years' children (aged 0 - 5) with SEND is given by SEND services and may include education, health or social care services.

An **Integrated Review** for 2 year olds uses information from parent carers, health visitors and preschool settings to identify areas where children may need additional support and helps in planning early intervention. The following services may support early years' children with SEND in Somerset:

**Early Years' Area SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator)** - early years' area SENCOs are advisory teachers who are experienced in working with young children with SEND and their families. They provide advice for early years' settings about early identification and support for young children with SEND.

**Portage Home Visiting Service** - supports children with the most complex SEND in their homes and pre-school settings. Portage workers help children and their parent carers. The service also works closely with other services to help make sure the children's needs are met in the best ways possible.

**PERSCEY (Portage Early Response to Social Communication in Early Years)** - supports children with complex social communication needs. PERSCEY works with children, their families and pre-school settings to help meet the SEND needs, develop children's strengths, interests and individuality.

**Time Together Home Visiting Service** - is a home based approach that uses a range of play experiences to help parent carers to understand their child better and develop rewarding relationships.

**MAISEY (Multi Agency Identification and Support in Early Years)** - support for children from birth to age 5, with the most complex SEND, is coordinated through MAISEY. The role of MAISEY meetings is to make sure that education, health and social care services work together to consider a child's needs and identify the best support.

**Starting school** - school entry planning - This meeting gives parent carers time to talk about their child starting school with practitioners who have been, and will be, involved in the child's education. The meeting should be a positive, friendly experience and help ensure a successful start at school for the child.

**School and parent carer involvement** - from 0-5 years, parent carers can contact the SENCO within the nursery or pre-school and can keep in contact with the class teacher and the school SENCO once the child has started school. All SENCOs must ensure that parent carers are informed of the child's progress and involved in actions planned and taken to best support the child. Towards the end of the child's reception year (first year in school), an Early Years' Foundation Stage Profile will be completed which includes information on a child's knowledge, understanding and ability, and is helpful for planning and supporting a child beyond their early years.

**For more information** on all of these services, visit Somerset Choices: [www.somersetchoices.org.uk](http://www.somersetchoices.org.uk)

## 9. Schools and colleges

Schools and colleges have a vital role to play in supporting children and young people with SEND.

Many children and young people will have their learning needs met by their local school or college. Teaching staff will know how to identify learners with special educational needs through tracking of progress, observation and assessment and will support their needs. Examples include small groups for literacy and numeracy, social skills groups and access to computers and specialist materials and equipment.

The range of provision that a school or college has available, the strategies and approaches should be explained on the school or college website, and at planning and review meetings with parents and learners. This may be called “a provision map”.

Teachers and lecturers are accountable for the progress for all learners in their classes, including those with SEND (even those supported by specialist and support staff).

Some children and young people may require even more special educational provision and support to make sure of the best possible outcomes. Some learners with more complex SEND needs may not make the expected progress despite relevant and purposeful actions to work out and meet needs. When this is the case, a request can be made to the local authority to make a needs assessment and decide if an EHC plan is appropriate.

All schools and colleges will give particular thought to supporting children and young people through transition, for example to the next school or onto college, and how best to prepare for adulthood and build skills for life.

### **So, what does this mean for schools and colleges?**

#### **They must:**

- provide the best possible education for all children and young people
- work together with others in education, health and social care
- listen to and engage with learners
- have a sharper focus on achieving learner outcomes
- work closely with learners and parent carers and actively involve them in decision making
- schools will have a governor with SEND responsibilities

**For more information** on EHC assessment and plans please see insert 10 in this pack or visit [www.somersetchoices.org.uk](http://www.somersetchoices.org.uk) and search using key words "education, health and care plan". You can also search this site to find out about schools or colleges in Somerset and read about what they do to support SEND.

## 10. Education, Health and Care assessment and plans

One of the major changes introduced by the Children and Families Act 2014 is the replacement of statements of special educational needs (SEN) with a new Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan).

**Who can have an EHC plan?** Some children and young people with more complex needs benefit from a co-ordinated assessment process and the new Education, Health and Care plan.

**Who can make the request?**

- the child's parents
- a young person over the age of 16 but under the age of 25
- a person acting on behalf of a school or post 16 setting
- other people including foster carers, health and social care professionals, probation services

If the request is made by other than the parent/young person, it should be made with the knowledge and, ideally, the agreement of the child's parent or the young person.

The local authority will consider if a needs assessment is necessary. It will look to see if the setting/school/college has looked carefully at the child or young person's special educational needs and if they have put in place relevant and purposeful action to meet those needs, but still the child or young person has not made the expected progress.

If the local authority agrees to an EHC needs assessment, then assessments, information and reports about the child/young person's education, health and care needs will be collected.

Once collected and looked at, a decision will be made if an EHC plan is to be issued. The plan will be written with the help and advice from all those working with and supporting the child/ young person, taking into account the views of the child or young person.

Once an EHC needs assessment has been requested there are 20 weeks for the whole process leading to a final EHC plan.

### **What are the benefits of an EHC plan?**

- one single assessment – you only need to tell your story once
- the child or young person's education, health and care needs are considered
- the views of child or young people and their family about their needs and hopes for the future are included
- a personal budget may be available (please see insert 11)
- a child or young person may have an EHC plan up to the age of 25 to help them through education or training and prepare for adulthood
- there is a coordinated statutory plan across education, health and care to support the child/young person in education.

**For more information** about EHC plan or the assessment process visit [www.somersetchoices.org.uk](http://www.somersetchoices.org.uk)

## 11. Explaining Special Educational Needs Personal Budgets

Some children and young people with complex special educational needs may benefit from a coordinated education, health and care plan, in order to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Some people have personal budgets for health provision called Personal Health Budgets, and for Social Care for example for Fair Access to Short Breaks. The family or young person may manage some or all of the personal budget directly themselves using a Direct Payment.

Personal budgets have become available for special educational needs provision. This is money identified to pay for special educational provision and support written in an Education, Health and Care Plan.

Young people and parents of children who have EHC plans can request a Personal Budget (PB) either during the drafting of an EHC plan, or once the plan has been issued and is under review. Having a personal budget means that parents/young people know how much money is “in the pot”. However, parents/young people do not have to request a Personal Budget if they would prefer not to have one.

A personal budget for special educational needs can include a Direct Payment (DP). This means that the parent or young person is given the money for some services and manages the money themselves, being responsible for buying the support/service and paying for it. Personal budgets and Direct Payments must be agreed by the local authority, and where a DP is for special

educational provision in a school or college, then the school or college must also agree. Parent carers and young people can work together with everyone involved to agree what needs to be put in place to meet the child/young person's special educational needs. This is an opportunity to be creative and flexible as a team, and to think about the best way to get results. The provision planned will need to be linked to the needs and outcomes specified in the EHC Plan.

**In Somerset we have made a commitment to:**

- be more transparent, accountable and open in all our processes and decision making.
- give parent carers and young people information to help them understand Personal SEN Budgets.
- provide Personal SEN Budgets to help children and young people achieve the educational outcomes identified in their EHC plans.
- work in partnership with practitioners, young people and families all contributing their knowledge, skills and expertise (this is sometimes called co-production).

Somerset wants to see all children and young people with SEND achieve their potential and go on to live fulfilled lives as independently as they are able to. For more information search for 'Personal Budgets' at [www.somersetchoices.org.uk](http://www.somersetchoices.org.uk)

## 12. Mental Capacity Act 2005

The Mental Capacity Act is all about making decisions. It is law. It is designed to protect and empower individuals who may lack the ability to make their own decisions about their care and treatment. Under the Children and Families Act 2014, parental rights pass to young people automatically at the end of compulsory schooling (the end of the academic year in which they turn 16). The SEND Code of Practice (2014, updated 2015) gives more detail about this, and describes how families will continue to play a critical role in supporting a young person with special educational needs and disability.

### **To make a decision young people need to:**

- understand information
- remember it for long enough
- think about the information
- communicate their decision, for example, by talking, signing or blinking

The legal concept of mental capacity is written in the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and the Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice, which is legal guidance.

## There are 5 rules

- 1. Assume capacity** - This has to be considered on an individual basis and in the light of the circumstances at the time. A young person may be able to make daily decisions, for example, what they want wear or eat, however it may not be appropriate for them to decide what school they want to attend.
- 2. Support** - If a person finds it hard to understand words, it is not enough to just talk to them about the decision. Think creatively about how you communicate, use symbols, signing or photos and pictures.
- 3. Unwise decisions** - No young person can be protected by the Mental Capacity Act from making a bad decision. If a young person is able to understand a decision they must be allowed to take it.
- 4. Best interests** - If someone is not able to make a decision, then the people helping them must only make decisions in their 'best interests'.
- 5. Least restrictive as possible** - When a decision is made for somebody, it must give them as much freedom as possible.

Where it is agreed that a young person does not have capacity to make a decision then a parent carer will automatically be the person making that decision on their behalf unless the Court of Protection has appointed a different person to be their deputy.

**For more information** visit [www.somersetchoices.org.uk](http://www.somersetchoices.org.uk)

## 13. SENDIAS - Information, advice and support

Information, advice and support services about SEND are available to children and young people up to the age of 25 and their parent carers.

In Somerset, the main service is called SENDIAS (Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support). This service is free and confidential. SENDIAS supports children, young people and parent carers to be involved in decisions about their education, health and care.

### **How can SENDIAS support children, young people and parent carers?**

- leaflets on many SEND topics and the special educational needs system
- advice and support by email and telephone helpline
- support to help plan and prepare for meetings including school meetings
- one to one support with asking for an Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment and help through the EHC process
- they can forward you on or signpost to other support services
- advice and support to parent carers on the schools admissions and appeals process

**For more information** about other information, advice and support services please visit Somerset Choices on [www.somersetchoices.org.uk](http://www.somersetchoices.org.uk) and search SEND information services