

## Information for parents

### The special educational needs and disability (SEND) reforms - England

**contact a family**  
for families with disabled children



## The local offer explained

From 1 September 2014 the Children and Families Act requires all local authorities to publish and maintain a 'local offer'. A local offer is a wide range of information about all the support and facilities which families can expect to find in their area for children and young people who have special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities.

The information should cover education, health and social care support and services for children and young people aged between 0 and 25.

The local offer is not a guarantee that a particular service will be available, but should be a useful guide to what you can expect to find in your area, and how you can access that service.

### Key principles

- The local offer should not just be a list of services. It should give a broad range of information about the support that the local authority expects to be available across education, health and social care. The information should be clear and easy to find.
- Children, young people and parent carers must be involved in developing the local offer and it should reflect what they need.
- Local schools, colleges, health services and other services which support children and young people should also help to develop the local offer.
- It should say who a particular service is for, how to apply, and how decisions are made about who gets that service.
- The local offer should say clearly where families can get information, advice and support. It should give information on making complaints or challenging decisions.

- The local offer is not just about what is within that local authority. It must also include services outside the local authority area which children and young people might use. For example, a specialist hospital in another area or a school or college in another local authority.
- The local offer must be reviewed regularly to make sure it is up to date and still meets the needs of families in the area. The local authority should involve families in this process.
- The local authority must make public what children, young people and parents tell them about their local offer and say clearly what they will do about the comments they receive.

### What can I find in the local offer?

By 1 September 2014 local authorities must publish the first version of their local offer on their website. This must be developed and improved over time.

Detailed guidance can be found in the *Special Educational needs and disability code of practice: 0-25 years Chapter 4*.

On the next page is a summary of the kind of information you should be able to find in your area's local offer.

### Need advice?

Call our freephone helpline  
**0808 808 3555**  
**helpline@cafamily.org.uk**  
Open Monday to Friday, 9.30am-5pm



- Information about all the types of education available for children and young people. It must include early years settings, mainstream and special schools, approved independent schools, pupil referral units, post-16 settings, alternative education.
- How children with special educational needs (SEN) are identified and assessed. This should include information about:
  - the support which mainstream education settings generally provide at the level of SEN support (see *Extra support in mainstream school – SEN support*)
  - how disabled children and young people are included
  - specialist support services available (for example speech and language therapy) linked to the child or young person's special educational needs (SEN)
  - information about how support for SEN is funded.
- How parents and young people can ask for an assessment for an Education, Health and Care plan, and how the assessment is carried out (see factsheets on *Education, Health and Care needs assessments* and *Education, Health and Care plans*).
- Education and training options for young people leaving school. Should include further education, apprenticeships, supported employment, and information about support to help young people prepare for adulthood and higher education.
- School and college transport arrangements.
- Support to help children and young people move between phases of education (for example, from primary to secondary, secondary to college, preparing for independent living).
- How children and young people with medical conditions are supported in education, and through specialist services like occupational therapy and mental health.
- Other healthcare services, like the wheelchair service, continence service and nursing care.
- Information, advice and support relating to special educational needs and disabilities, including parent carer forums and support groups in the area.
- Social care support, including short breaks, leisure activities, and childcare. Should include information about how families can ask for social care assessments.
- Information about making complaints about services, resolving disagreements, mediation, and appealing to tribunal.

## Where can I find my local offer?

All local authorities must have their local offer available by 1 September 2014, although they are likely to continue improving it as time goes on. You should be able to find the local offer for your area by going to your local authority's website and searching for 'local offer'. The local authority must make sure that everyone has access to the local offer and should provide the information in a different way if you need this.

*The Local Offer has two key purposes:*

*To provide clear, comprehensive, accessible and up-to-date information about the available provision and how to access it, and*

*To make provision more responsive to local needs and aspirations by directly involving disabled children and those with SEN and their parents, and disabled young people and those with SEN, and service providers in its development and review.*

(SEND Code of Practice section 4.2)

Find out how you can get involved in the changes in your area by joining your local parent carer forum. Contact the National Network of Parent Carer Forums:

[www.nnpf.org.uk](http://www.nnpf.org.uk) 020 7608 8708 [info@nnpf.org.uk](mailto:info@nnpf.org.uk)  
[www.facebook.com/NNPCF](https://www.facebook.com/NNPCF) [www.twitter.com/NNPCF](https://www.twitter.com/NNPCF)

**Got a question about the changes?  
Call the Contact a Family freephone  
helpline: 0808 808 3555  
[helpline@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cafamily.org.uk)  
[www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk)**

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