

WHO TO GO TO FOR HELP: WHO'S WHO?

Understanding who to go to for help can be a daunting task, often for parents and schools alike. Listed below are the key professionals associated with SEND, in alphabetical order.

Educational Professionals:

Educational consultant:

Usually an independent consultant who helps parents/students or schools and other organisations with a variety of aspects relating to education. Some educational consultants are employed directly by Local Authorities and may specialize in areas such as Numeracy, Literacy, Special Educational Needs or specific areas of special educational needs.

Schools and parents are able to access independent educational consultants for advice and information, training and auditing.

Educational Psychologist (EP):

Educational psychologists are principally involved in helping children and young people who are experiencing difficulties within the educational setting which may be associated with complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. They often work with small groups or individually to enable the individual to cope with their emotional difficulties. They can also work with parents and teaching personnel to ensure continuity across home and school. They are involved in the Statutory Needs Assessment process.

EPs are usually contacted by the School when a concern arises within a maintained setting. Where a concern arises within an Independent setting, it may be necessary to employ an independent EP or Specialist Assessor.

Head of Centre:

This is usually the Head Teacher of a school or Principal of a College. They are ultimately accountable and responsible, along with the governing body, for the safety and wellbeing of the children within the educational setting. They share the responsibility with the governors for the correct implementation of JCQ Regulations concerning students who may need access arrangements during public examinations. They are responsible for approving the specialist teacher who undertakes the diagnostic assessment and reporting for access arrangements.

Parents should contact the Head of Centre if they have concerns regarding the provision of SEND support or access arrangements, if their concerns have not been addressed by the SENCO.

Specialist Assessor:

A fully qualified and experienced teacher who has undergone additional post-graduate training in specific learning difficulties and/or SEN and are able to assess pupils and candidates for access arrangements for SATs, GCSE, GCE, BTEC Diploma and Functional Skills examinations. Specialist Teachers are extensively trained in the use of psychometric assessment and diagnostic assessment. They are knowledgeable in both theory and practice of assessment of learning difficulties, including assessing underlying ability and environmental modifications. They are able to choose and use appropriate standardised assessments and interpret the results to make detailed recommendations for access arrangements for external exams and suggestions for intervention programmes for IEPs and ILPs.

All Specialist Assessors making assessments for Access Arrangements in public exams must be approved by the Head of Centre and work closely with the School SENCO and must have the appropriate assessment qualifications.

Parents and schools can approach independent specialist assessors, for a detailed diagnostic assessment of specific learning difficulties and possible access arrangements in examinations. In addition to a teaching qualification (BEd, MEd, PGCE), they should have the following qualification:

- MA in SEN and/or
- PGDip SpLD and/or
- CPT3A and/or
- Practicing Certificate

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) - Sometimes referred to as 'Inclusion Manager', SENDCO or AENCO:

Each setting has a statutory duty to appoint a SENCo who **must** be a qualified teacher. They are the Key person in a school/early years setting responsible for the organisation, management and co-ordination of SEN provision. They are often part of the school leadership team and influence strategic planning of SEN provision. They may co-ordinate the work of a team of Teaching Assistants in addition to multidisciplinary co-ordination, liaison with other professionals.

The SENCO is the key person to approach if parents have concerns relating to SEND provision and/or assessment. The SENCO has a statutory duty to work closely with parents when coordinating the care of their son or daughter.

Specialist Advisory Teacher:

Usually employed by the Local Authority they support SENCOs to be able to advise upon support needs for pupils with a variety of needs.

There is a mandatory requirement for every LA to provide specialist teachers for VI and HI. However, some LAs continue to provide support for children and young people with other specific learning difficulties.

Schools will usually contact Specialist Advisory Teachers where there is a need to do so. They are not contacted directly by parents, but once involved, they can visit parents at home.

Teaching Assistant (TA)/Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs):

Sometimes known as LSA – Learning Support Assistant.

Are appointed to support classroom teachers in their day-to-day teaching and learning. Many TAs are employed to work on a one-to-one basis with children with SEN.

TAs have mixed accountabilities. Those employed to support pupils with SEND are usually deployed by the SENCO. However, when supporting a pupil in class, the class teacher would direct their work. When supporting a group of pupils outside of class, for example when delivering intervention groups, their work is often directed either by the SENCO or a HLTA.

The SENCO should keep a provision map of all additional SEND support.

Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) are more highly qualified TAs, to Level 4, who are appointed to undertake a wide variety of duties which may include teaching whole classes.

However, the vast majority of TAs are appointed to work to assist classroom teachers with their work co-ordinated through the teacher they support.

When a TA is provided as a result of an EHCP, they may be asked to work as the child or young person's keyworker. In which case, the parents should communicate regularly (on a daily basis) with the TA.

Health Professionals:

Audiologist:

Usually employed by local health services, they carry out hearing tests and may identify children who might need a hearing aid.

Children are referred to an audiologist through the child's GP. A school might suspect a hearing difficulty and may recommend that the parents take their child to see their GP to obtain a referral to an audiologist.

Clinical Psychologists:

Are health professionals who have a degree in psychology and a postgraduate qualification in clinical work. They usually work with children and young people through the CAMHS team, when emotional and behavioural difficulties are severe and impacting upon the individual's attendance, or at the risk of exclusion.

It is notoriously difficult to obtain a referral to a clinical psychologist. Referral is usually through a doctor, such as the paediatrician or GP, but can be made through the Health Visitor, Community Nurse or other appropriate health professional. SENCOs can refer children and young people who are at risk of exclusion for a CAMHS assessment.

Community Nurse:

Usually based within the GP surgery they give support and advice to parents and pre-school groups and schools on the administration of drugs. Some special schools have a full or part-time nurse employed as part of the school. Some areas are able to access community nursing support.

Parents can make an appointment with the community nurse to discuss how to administer medication, or change dressings. The level of involvement of the nurse will depend upon the LA area and the school.

Health Visitor:

A health professional, employed through the health centre, that specialises in child development in young children (pre-school). They often visit families within the home and can give advice about the care of very young children, child development,

feeding and sleep, behaviour and safety. Health visitors can also help you to find out about childcare and specialist help for the child.

Parents are usually contacted by the health visitor when they have a baby, who conducts regular developmental checks. Parents can ask to see the health visitor at their local GP surgery.

Occupational Therapist:

Are allied health professionals who specialise in helping children development their use of equipment and ability to undertake practical and everyday tasks and ultimately to function as independent learners. They usually work with children with physical disability, medical condition, mental-health related difficulties or learning disability. They work with parents and schools and the pupils themselves.

Referral is usually made via the child's GP or paediatrician. A SENCO may request that a parent requests for a referral if they have concerns that their pupil might be dyspraxic.

Ophthalmologist:

A specialist trained optician specialising in visual perception in addition to the physical development of the eye. They are able to diagnose difficulties, such as a squint, which may lead to reading difficulties. They often recommend eye exercises or coloured glasses where concerns arise.

Referral is usually made directly to an independent ophthalmologist by the parent, or indirectly via the optician

Paediatrician:

Doctors who specialise in child health and development. They may see the child for an assessment or to monitor their health and progress. They may refer your child to other professionals for specialist advice and assessment e.g. Occupational Therapy. They can also offer information, advice and support about any medical condition(s) the child may have.

Developmental paediatricians specialise in neurodevelopmental disorders such as Autism, ADHD, dyspraxia and Aspergers Syndrome in addition to other less common developmental disorders.

The Medical Health Officer is usually an assigned paediatrician who conducts the statutory needs assessment necessary for an EHCP and referral is usually made through the Local Authority.

Parents can request a referral to a paediatrician through their GP for a number of developmental concerns.

Physiotherapist:

Allied health professionals who specialise in helping children to develop their movement skills, in particular their mobility, posture and assist physical conditions. They visit schools and other educational settings and work out of hospitals or community health centres. They often work in a consultative role providing support, training and advice for teachers and teaching assistants to provide the necessary intervention on a regular basis.

Referral to a physiotherapist is usually made through the child's GP or paediatrician

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS):

This is NHS provided mental health care for children and young people up to age 19 years. They are often organised in teams and are work in Tiers. Tier one being universal services, such as community nurses. Tier Two relating to community specialist services, Tier three services are generally multidisciplinary with a range of staff and Tier Four is a highly specialised service for the most needy individuals and include inpatient units, of which there are only a handful across the country.

Referral to CAMHS is through the child's GP or community nurse. SENCOs often work closely with CAMHS

Paediatric Neurologist:

A doctor who specialises in how the brain works in very young children. They are often employed in specialist hospital centres and children's hospitals. They are usually involved in helping children with complex neurological conditions, such as a brain tumor and hydrocephalus.

Referral is made through the child's paediatrician or GP

Psychotherapists, psychoanalysts and counsellors:

Work in child mental health services and offer therapy in the form of listening and offering advice.

Referral is made through the child's paediatrician or GP

Speech and Language Therapist:

Allied health professionals who help with language and communication. They can offer support and advice to parents and schools regarding any type of communication problem (including physiological problems such as a cleft palate or psychological problems such as stammering) and help children develop their communication, social interaction, language and speech. They can also work with very young children who struggle with feeding and swallowing.

Referral is usually made through the child's paediatrician or GP

Local Authority Personnel:

Educational Welfare Officer (EWO):

A Social Worker assigned to work with schools and work with children, parents, carers, schools and other agencies to promote regular school attendance, deal with absenteeism and help children and young people at risk of exclusion.

All state schools have a designated EWO. Independent schools can buy into the service

Keyworker/Lead professional

All families of children with complex disabilities and SEN are assigned a lead professional or keyworker. Their principal role is to be a single-point-of-contact for advice and support. They can be from any of the agencies and can range from being the family's social worker, to the school SENCO or Learning Support teacher.

Best practice is for any family of a child with SEND to be able to access a Lead Professional. Parents should initially ask their school SENCO or social worker (if they have one) who their Lead Professional will be

Parent Partnership Service:

All LAs are required by law to provide independent parental support and advice to help them understand their rights and supporting them through the process. They are able to attend meetings and provide ongoing support and advice.

Parents are able to self refer to the independent service, via the Local Authority. Further information should be available on the relevant LA website

Portage Home Visitor:

Portage workers usually work with early years children by supporting families of children with SEND. They come from across a range of backgrounds, including education, health and social care. They help the family to develop their child's skills and liaise closely with both health and educational professionals to ensure appropriate support is put into place.

Referral is through the child's early years setting or through the health visitor

Social Worker:

Can help with family support and provide information regarding parent support groups. They usually liaise with a variety of professionals and are able to put parents in touch with other agencies. A child with a complex disability, such as CP, is usually assigned a social worker to ensure the family are able to access respite care.

Referral is through the SENCO, health visitor or other professional involved in the care and management of the child