

A parent's guide to Special educational needs.



From one special needs parent to another. I hope you find this useful.

Special Needs Parents get back up more times than they get knocked down, who give more than they ever expect to receive, who still show love to others even when their own heart is broken, who smile through the sad times, who light the way for others, who spread love and joy, and always gives thanks to the child with special needs in their lives for showing them the meaning of true love.

A Very Special Needs Resource

What is a special educational need?

Special educational needs, often referred to as 'SEN' or 'SEND' (Special educational needs and disabilities), is a term used to describe learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for a child to learn compared to children of the same age.

All children may experience challenges with their learning at some point and for most children these difficulties can be overcome with support from teachers and home. However, children with SEND are likely to need extra or different help to be able to learn.

Some children may have SEND because of a medical condition or disability, other children may have SEND without a diagnosis or disability.

Children are not considered to have SEND just because their first language is not English. Although some children for whom English is a second language may also have SEND.



Every **STUDENT** *can learn,*
just not on the same day,
or in the same *way.*

Areas you may come across.

- Children may have difficulties in one or more of these areas:
- **Cognition and Learning** - A child may find all learning difficult or have difficulties with specific activities such as reading or spelling. A child may have trouble understanding instructions and carrying out tasks. A child may have memory difficulties.
- **Communication and Interaction** – A child may have difficulty in talking to others or understanding what others are saying to them. A child may have difficulty with interactions with others, such as not being able to take turns.
- **Physical and Sensory** – A child may have hearing or vision loss. A child may have difficulty with sensory processing, being under or over-sensitive. A child may have a medical condition which affects them physically.
- **Social, Emotional and Mental Health** - A child may display behaviors such as having very low self-esteem or being very anxious. A child may display challenging, disruptive or distressing behaviors. A child may have underlying conditions which affect their mental health.

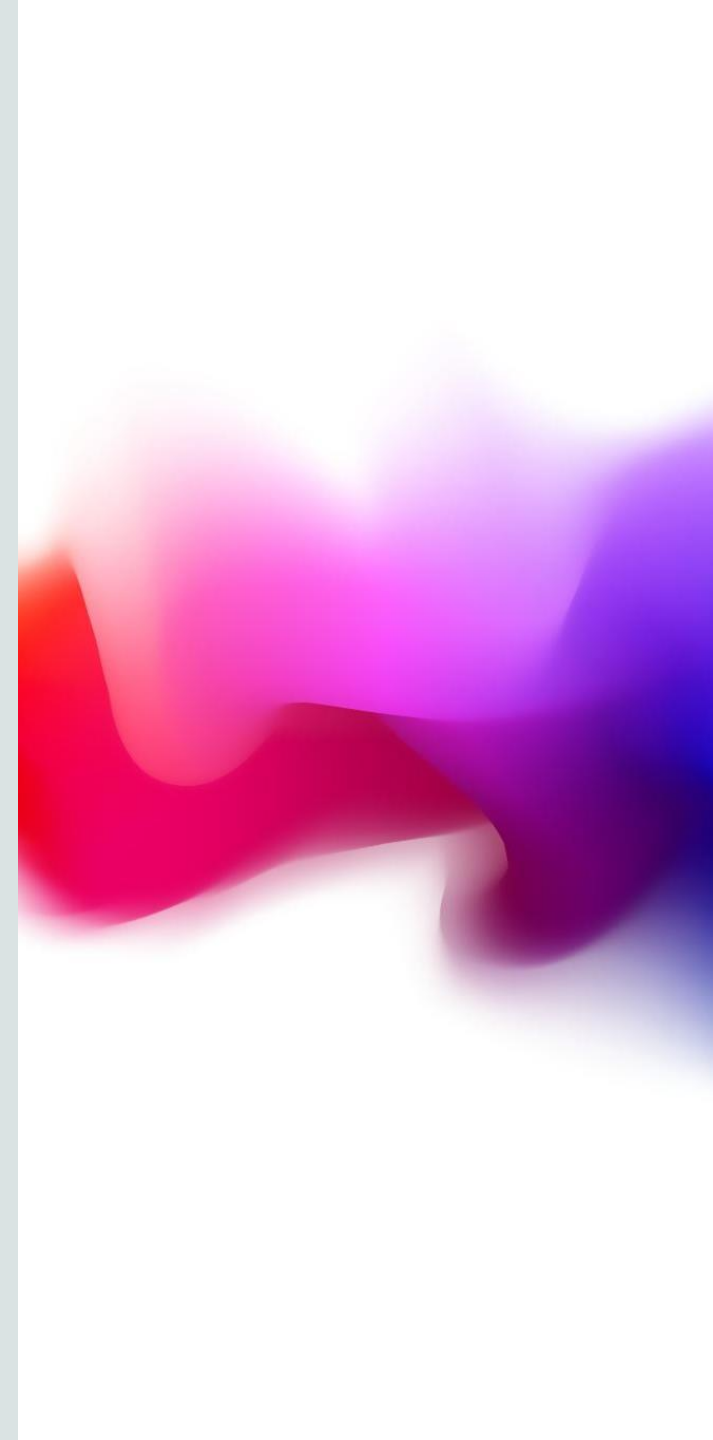




What is a S.E.N.C.O?

SENCo stands for Special Educational Needs Coordinator. You may hear the name referred to in full, as its acronym (short letters) or as SEN Coordinator.

SEN Coordinators are members of teaching staff who are responsible for special educational needs within a school. Every school in the UK is required to have a SENCo to ensure that every child who has SEN are supported as well as to help them reach their full educational potential. If you do not know who holds this role pop into school, visit the web-site or call the office and they will happily give you further information, chances are if you have concerns the SENCo. is already aware of the child's needs but please be mindful they usually have teaching roles too so can be very busy.



What is a TLP or IEP?

- An IEP (Individual Learning Plan) or TLP (Targeted Learning Plan) is a document that helps teaching staff to plan for your child. It should include strategies to help them learn and be used to review their progress. The plan should be guided by your child's profile, records, assessments, their strengths and statement of SEN if they have one. It should help your child to access and engage with the curriculum.
- IEPs/ Sen plans are different for each child or young person and should set out what should be taught, how it should be taught and how often. There isn't a standard format for IEPs, but they generally include details of short-term targets and the additional support that has been put in place to help your child meet them. The document should be accessible and understandable to all. It should be agreed by you and, wherever possible, your child as it's important for you to be involved at this first stage, the more you can help the better outcome for your child.

Examples of what may be in the plan:-

- The nature of the child or young person's learning or developmental difficulties
- What help should be given
- Who will give the help, what equipment, programmes or materials will be used
- When, where and how often the help will be given
- The nature of the support required from parents at home



EDUCATIONAL HEALTH & CARE PLAN

An Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan) is a legal document which:

- identifies your child's special educational **needs**
- the additional or specialist **provision** (support, therapy etc) required to meet their needs
- the **outcomes** (capabilities, achievements) the provision should help them to achieve
- the placement (the school or college they should attend).

What is an E.H.C.P plan?

From my own experience I would describe an e.h.c.p as a legal document that has to be reviewed yearly in line with the local authorities guideline. We all know a year is a long time in the eyes of a special needs child and they can come on massively or decline massively in this space of time. This is why they need to be kept up to date. You will be fully informed at all times of updates and changes and your views will most certainly be taken into account. Having said this I would suggest you let your child's school make recommendations about day to day things during school and educational needs as they are most certainly better placed to be making these judgements, after all they care for your child 5 days a week for min of 6 hours. Children can act very differently at home to in a school setting this is not a reflection on a parent this is just normal behaviour so don't be upset if a member of your child's team says something like " we don't see that at school", they are not disbelieving you they just cannot lie on your child's documents but all your information can go in the parent section. From experience an ehcp does not automatically entitle a child to a special school and your school will usually be the named school. This can be very frustrating if you know a child needs to move but don't get upset at the school their hands are tied too and will keep working with you to get what is needed. An ehcp plan is only beneficial to school and health and has no bearing on the home, if you are struggling at home an ehcp plan will not help with this and should not be pushed on this basis. If you are struggling please seek out the family support or speak to your child's school for further support, there is no shame in asking for help.

Should I chose mainstream or special education?

This is a difficult decision many parents may face. None of us can 100 percent make this judgement as none of us can read the future, we can however work together with the team supporting our child to come up with the best solution and an agreed plan. Most times you will have a choice but in rare circumstances it may be out of your hands and this you will have to discuss with the relevant agencies. I will enclose some helpful numbers of agencies who support parents and families. I have children in both settings myself and can say they both have their strong points but both have faults too (this is life). I would always recommend trying to keep a child in a mainstream setting as long as they are safe, happy, making some form of progress and there are not behavioural reasons they must move.

From experience mainstream children do learn at a faster rate even if the work is differentiated (at a level suited to the child). Special school its more about social skills and everyday life skills and education through play based activities. Both are great and school and yourself are best placed to make this opinion as you know the child.

It's useful to have family ,friends and other parents to talk to but everyone has their own opinions and this should not sway yours. Keep an open mind and don't take as gospel what others say judge for yourself, settings change and are not always how others view them.





What is inclusion?

In education “inclusion” has become the term used to describe **the right of parents and children to access mainstream education** alongside their peers, where parents want it and children’s needs can be met. Integration, where the focus was on the child’s ability to adapt has been replaced by Inclusion.



What is a TAF / CAF meeting?

- **TAF meetings** are when the family meets with the different key professionals involved in supporting them to produce a plan to help them achieve their goals. This plan is then reviewed on a regular basis to make sure it is working or if anything needs to change.
- **CAF Meetings** are a tool for workers in all agencies and organisations. The meetings are for complex cases and should be considered when: You have exhausted the services and resources of your own agency and the need/concern remains.
- This can sometimes sound quite scary but they are nothing more than getting all the professionals around the same table to support the family.

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**BELIEVE IN YOURSELF.
AS A PARENT,
YOU ARE YOUR CHILD'S
BEST THERAPIST
AND ADVOCATE.**

It takes a big
heart
to help shape
little
minds.

What is an educational psychologist?



Educational psychologists work within local authorities, in partnership with families and other professionals, to help children and young people achieve their full potential. Educational psychologists support schools and the local authority to improve all children's experiences of learning.

They use their training in psychology and knowledge of child development to assess difficulties children may be having with their learning. They provide advice and training on how schools might help children to learn and develop. They recommend methods, or develop strategies in partnership with schools, to help a child learn more effectively. Strategies may include teaching approaches, improvements to learning environments, advice on curriculum materials and behavior support.



What is a PRU / Short stay school?

- A PRU is a type of school that caters for children who aren't able to attend a mainstream school. Pupils are often referred there if they need greater care and support than their school can provide. It may be due to being permanently excluded from their mainstream school for behaviour reasons, or at risk of permanent exclusion.
- Short Stay Provision can provide additional academic support, social and emotional wellbeing programs and additional opportunities to develop personal and social skills. They work closely with your child's school, families and outside agencies to provide a positive experience across one term in order for the student to be set up to succeed when they return to their school on a full time basis.

How to positively work with your child's school team?



Do's

- . Communicate with your child's teacher.
 - . keep open lines of communication with the staff.
 - . Be honest.
 - . Be respectful, even if you don't agree.
 - . ask for meetings (when applicable).
 - . ask questions.
 - . share medical letters and relevant information.
 - . be patient with staff they have lots of children to look after plus yours.
 - . share any positive things you have done at home with staff.
 - . ask for support when needed.
 - . Attend meetings about your child.
- Share your concerns with school.
- . Tell the staff when they are getting it right.

Do not.

- . Compare your child to others in the class for example reading stages, all children work at different stages and it's only going to upset you and make your child's self-esteem low.
- . Be negative about staff in front of your child (if at all).
- . Speak unkindly of other children in ear shot of your child (they will copy).
- . Get angry about small things (everyone is human).
- . Be disrespectful of others views.
- . Play staff off against one another (they do talk).
- . Keeping demanding things to be sorted immediately some things take time (they will get back to you).
- . Swear or be offensive to the staff, you may be frustrated but chances are so are they.
- . Make the teacher look or feel silly in front of other parents I.e at the class door/gate.

Contact - for families with disabled children

E-mail mailinfo@contact.org.uk Telephone 020 7608 8700, Freephone helpline 0808 808 3555 Website <https://contact.org.uk/> Send email

National Association of Special Educational Needs see google for details.

High Five Lancashire (family days out).

Contact Name Nanette E-mail highfivelancashire@gmail.com Website <https://www.high5lancashire.com/> Send email

Support

IPSEA Independent Parental Special Education Advice

IPSEA's Tribunal Helpline gives next step advice on appeals and disability discrimination claims to the SEND Tribunal and is also the gateway to our Tribunal Support Service where a referral can be made for more extensive casework support from a volunteer, including representation at the hearing.

Address Independent Parental Special Education Advice, 24-26, Gold Street, Saffron Walden, Essex CB10 1EJ E-mail office@ipsea.net Telephone 01799 582030 Website [Get our support](#) Send email

SEND Local Offer Directory visit your local council website and view local offer.

Carers UK E-

mail <https://www.carersuk.org/about-us/contact-us> Telephone 020 7378 4999 Website <https://www.carersuk.org>

SENDIASS is committed to providing a flexible and supportive service. They provide an opportunity for all relevant people to work together to meet the special educational needs and disabilities of the individual child: The Service also provides advice and support relating to the admissions process and school exclusion. They also help with parent ehcp requests. Please google your local areas team



From one Parent to another believe in yourself.

YOU HAVE TO FIGHT THROUGH
SOME BAD DAYS TO EARN
THE BEST DAYS OF YOUR LIFE.



Being a parent of a special needs child is hard and some days can feel like a constant drain emotionally and physically, but I can hand on heart say these days don't last forever and as you watch your child grow and develop you will feel the rewards and benefits of your struggles. Some days I personally don't want to get up to another day of fighting with my child, constant demands, lack of sleep (what is sleep?), negative behaviors, being physically, verbally and mentally abused by my own child, but I get up and start everyday fresh in the hope today will be a good day. We have all sat there waiting for the phone to ring and when the school number comes up dreaded answering it in case your child has done something appalling, avoided parents on the playground as we feel judged, scared, isolated and like we are disliked due to our child's behavior, we have all ignored the judgmental stares and negative tuts and comments, but they don't matter, we carry on (we have no choice). I'm sure you have probably avoided social contact with family and friends just in case you upset your child, I have. I'm also sure you would love nothing more than to feel like you fit in with everyone else (imagine for one minute how your child feels) , you have to stay positive so your child can mimic this behavior and see that no matter how hard times feel we can get through them.

There is no shame in asking for help it could be a friend, family member, teacher, family support, gp, school nurse among many other professionals (just ask).

The days go so slowly but the years are fast and time waits for no one! enjoy the small positives in each day, my child didn't lick the glue stick at school today or poke little "Fred's" Eye out with their pencil that to me is far bigger progress than their "friend" who's just come out with a new level in their book. Some days it's really hard to find good in the day but if you look for it I promise you no matter how small it's there. My child came out of school with their clothes inside out and upside down Did it matter? No because the smile spoke a thousand words they had "dressed themselves". Please celebrate every little milestone your child achieves as far too often they will only hear the negative. Once your self-esteem is damaged it's the hardest thing to repair.

You are your child's voice and you need to believe in yourself because they believe in you.

This information is from me and is written from my perspective as a parent of multiple special needs children. The information is correct and up to date at the time of writing and I really hope it helps. Sometimes the professional's forget we are new to all this and have no idea what things mean (they don't mean too) and we are too scared of feeling silly to ask. I wish you all the best on your path and know you will do what you feel is correct for your child. Goodluck x A special needs mum x

