

A GP's guide to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Education, health and care plans in Somerset “

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

A Child or Young Person has SEND if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.

Children and young people with a disability do not necessarily have special educational needs (SEND), but there is a significant overlap between children with a disability, and those with additional needs to access education.

The Local Picture

14.9% of children in Somerset have been identified as having SEND and 1.8% have an EHCP.

Of these children in Somerset social emotional and mental health problems (SEMH) are above average and moderate learning disabilities and autistic spectrum condition are below average. 2% of children with SEND are electively home educated (above average). SEND. The abbreviation SEND relates to Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities.

Education Provision

Most children with SEND will have their needs met within the local core offer at their education setting.

There are 3 levels of support:

Universal level (every child).

SEN support

High needs support. This would normally require an Education Health and Care plan. Every school will have someone designated to monitor SEND provision often this will be a SENCO (special educational needs coordinator). However, SEND is the responsibility of all teachers.

Children are continuously assessed to ensure they are making progress, if not a plan is made and acted on and then the child is reviewed – this is the responsibility of the teacher and SENCO.

If after several cycles of the Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) process little or no progress is being made external professionals can be brought in to advise this may include speech and language, educational psychologists, physiotherapists, community nurses, occupational therapists, hearing support workers etc.

If needs cannot reasonably be met by the education setting, then a referral for an EHCP can be made. This is usually done by the education setting with the full knowledge of the child and parents. Referrals can also be made by parents, young people over the age of 16 or any other professional that works with the family.

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Education Health and Care Plans

An EHC plan is a legal document that describes a child or young person's special educational, health and social care needs. It explains the extra help that will be given to meet those need and how that help will support them to achieve what they want to in their life.

When the LA receive a request for an assessment, they gather the necessary information. The medical advice will include a report from a paediatrician (if involved) and a report from the GP. You may also be asked to identify other health professionals involved in the child/young person's care.

A decision whether to carry out an EHC needs assessment will be made within 6 weeks of the request. This decision will be made by the Local Authority following discussion with the Statutory SEND Panel and in line with the legal test. If the LA decide to issue an EHC plan they have a further 14 weeks (20 weeks in total) to complete this. If you have contributed to the process you should receive a copy of the plan.

Somerset's SEND Improvement Plan

Following a self-evaluation undertaken by a multi-agency group the following 7 areas have been identified as requiring improvement.

1. Governance arrangements in place in Somerset are not effective in holding leaders to account sufficiently to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
2. There is currently limited joint planning and commissioning of services, between education, health and care, to meet the needs of those with SEND.
3. There is inconsistent application of Somerset's strategy for identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of children and young people at the SEN support stage across the partnership
4. A need to strengthen the Local Offer from providers to address the inconsistency of experience reported by families.
5. The time it takes to issue EHC plans and the variable quality of these plans, the fact that these plans do not consistently capture a child or young person's needs and aspirations and that EHC plans are not able to be used as a valuable tool to support the planning and implementation of education, health and care provision to lead to better lived experiences for the child and their families.
6. Weaknesses in our approach to supporting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people with SEND who face challenges in relation to their social, emotional and mental health.
7. Weaknesses in the identification, assessment, diagnosis and support of those children and young people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

These are all areas that are currently being addressed by the wider system which includes education, early help, social care and health.

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For further information please see **Effective Support for CYP with SEND and their families in Somerset document.**

<https://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/effectivesupport-documents/>

Somerset's Local Offer <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/education-and-families/somersets-local-offer/>

To find more information on local services please visit
<https://choices.somerset.gov.uk/025>

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