

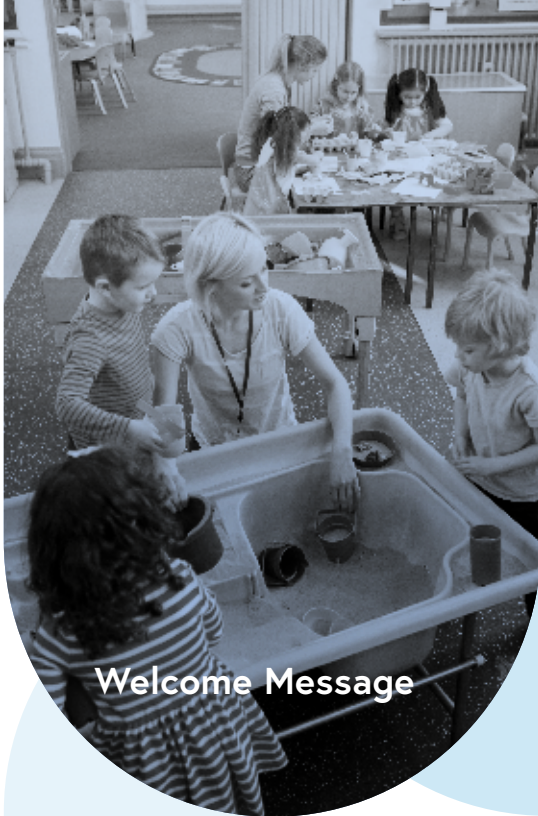


TOGETHER FROM THE START

**Creating a supportive start for
your child's school journey**

Contents

Welcome Message	1
Vision and Values	2
Understanding Your Child	3
Communication and Collaboration	5
Different ways to support at home	7
Things parents & carers need to do	8
One Page Profile	12
Glossary of Terms	15
SEND Information for parent carers and families	18



Welcome Message

Welcome to Together from the Start

A guide created to support you and your child as you begin this important new chapter in their school journey.

We know that starting school is a big step, not just for children but for families too. It brings with it a mix of excitement, questions, and sometimes uncertainty. That's why sen.se have come together - special schools, a specialist provision, an opportunity group, and a network of supportive providers - to offer a joined-up, thoughtful approach to starting school.

Our shared goal is simple: to ensure every child feels safe, understood, and supported from the very beginning. We believe that by working in partnership with you, we can create the best possible start for your child - one that recognises their individuality, builds on their strengths, and nurtures their potential.

This booklet is here to guide you through what to expect, how we'll get to know your child, and how we'll work with you every step of the way. We hope it gives you confidence, clarity and reassurance as you prepare for this exciting journey. There are spaces for you to make notes and an area in which you can save school specific information.

We're so glad to be on the journey with you - TOGETHER FROM THE START.

Vision & Values

Every child is unique, with their own strengths, challenges and aspirations. At the heart of our approach is a commitment to recognise and celebrate these differences. By working in close partnership with you - the people who know your child best - we aim to create a personalised and nurturing learning experience that supports each child to thrive and reach their full potential.

We understand that your journey so far may have involved navigating a range of challenges across different services and settings. That's why we want your experience with your child's school or setting to be a positive and empowering one.

This booklet is a collaboration between special schools, a specialist provision within a primary school, an opportunity group, parents and carers and a network of supportive providers - all members of sen.se. Together, we are developing a shared strategy and a set of tools to strengthen our partnership with parents and carers. We believe that by working together, we are stronger. Our collective expertise helps us better understand and meet the unique needs of every child and young person we support.

A strong partnership between home and school is essential for your child's success and well-being. We are committed to building a relationship based on trust, respect, and open communication. As your child's first and most important educator, your voice matters. By working together, we can create a supportive environment that nurtures your child's educational, social and emotional development.

We encourage your active involvement in all aspects of school life - from regular communication and parent-teacher meetings to school visits and events. Your engagement is invaluable in helping us understand and respond to your child's individual needs.



We know you'll want to understand:

- How we will get to know your child before they start with us
- What role you can play in that process as their parent or carer
- What opportunities your child will have to learn about our school before they begin (e.g. visits, tailored communication, etc.)
- What kind of support we will provide when your child starts school
- How two-way communication will continue throughout the school years

This booklet is designed to answer these questions and more. We're on this journey with you - Together from the Start.

There is also a published SEND strategy in Somerset, which embraces a vision that was developed through engagement with children and young people with SEND and their families to understand what is important to live a happy life.

The strategy has identified seven key outcomes, which together spell the word ACHIEVE.

AMBITIOUS: I can pursue my interests and aspirations

CONNECTED: I have relationships with people who are important to me

HEALTHY: I can access health and wellbeing support when I need it

INFORMED: I can make informed choices

EDUCATED: I can access education and opportunities for lifelong learning

VALUED: I am heard, have choices and have control over my life

EMPLOYED: I am employed or have access to money

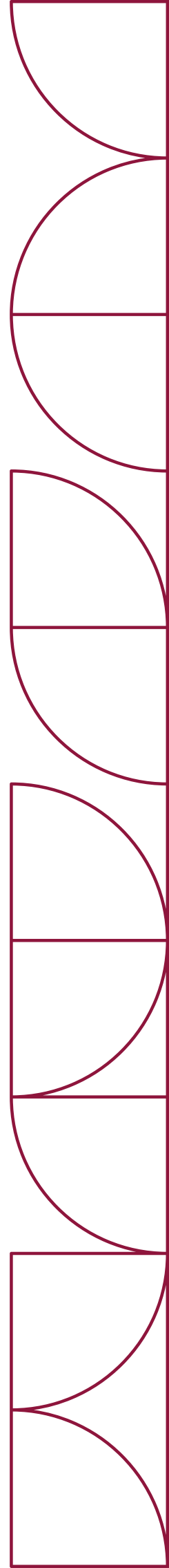
These outcomes are underpinned by three core things which run through the heart of Somerset's strategy.

EMPOWERMENT: Children and young people can ACHIEVE their ambitions and aspiration, if given the right opportunities and support.

EARLY INTERVENTION: The earlier children, young people and their families can access information and support, the more likely it is that they will ACHIEVE better outcomes in the future.

COLLABORATION: We ACHIEVE better outcomes for children, young people, and their families if we work together.

We want to work with you to realise these outcomes for your child. Thank you for being an integral part of our school community. We look forward to working with you to ensure the best possible outcomes for your child.



Understanding Your Child

School entry planning

Is child and family centered and may include:

SOCIAL STORY

SCHOOL TOUR

MULTI PROFESSIONAL
entry planning meeting

HOME VIST

NURSERY VISIT



TRANSITION BOOK/VIDEOS

MEET THE TEAM

COFFEE MORNINGS

STAY & PLAY
sessions prior to
September parents
carers and children

VISIT NEW SETTINGS
with current support staff

Timeline of what is likely to happen now:

Next Steps:

01
STEP

Your named school will make contact



02
STEP

You will be invited to a school-entry planning meeting



03
STEP

You and your child may be invited to a stay and play session



04
STEP

Your school may arrange to visit your child at their current setting/home



Subjects likely to be discussed at your pre-entry planning meeting:

- Language and Communication
- Interaction and social skills
- Previous setting/school experiences
- Being out in the community (if applicable)
- Sleep patterns
- Getting to school/Accessing transport
- Practical ways we can support your child's behaviours
- Special Interests
- Strengths
- Medical needs/Allergies
- Dietary requirements
- Disordered eating/food aversions/sensitivities
- Fears and anxieties
- Likes/Dislikes
- Sensory Needs
- Self Help skills e.g. putting on shoes, using the toilet, changing etc
- Other agencies supporting your child
- Any questions?



It is important for us to get this right for several reasons:

STARTING SCHOOL: can be challenging for any child. Proper planning helps ensure a smooth start, reducing anxiety for both the child and their family.

PERSONALISED SUPPORT: early planning allows schools to support your child's specific needs, from the very start.

SUPPORTING PROFESSIONALS: it is really helpful for schools to know which professionals are or have been involved. To effectively support your child's learning and development. If challenges arise, the school can quickly contact the right people for advice or support.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS: early communication between school and parents and carers allows the building of relationships creating a supportive partnership for your child.

SHARED UNDERSTANDING: planning helps set realistic expectations for your child's educational journey. It ensures that everyone involved understands your child's strengths and challenges, to support your child realise their full potential.

Communication and Collaboration

Each school/setting has a range of approaches to support clear communication between home and school. The communication will be more frequent when your child is starting in order to build up trust and confidence and will be tailored to the needs of you and your family. Please let your school know if they can offer you any communication support e.g. translator.

The communication approaches may include:



It is helpful for your school to know if your child:

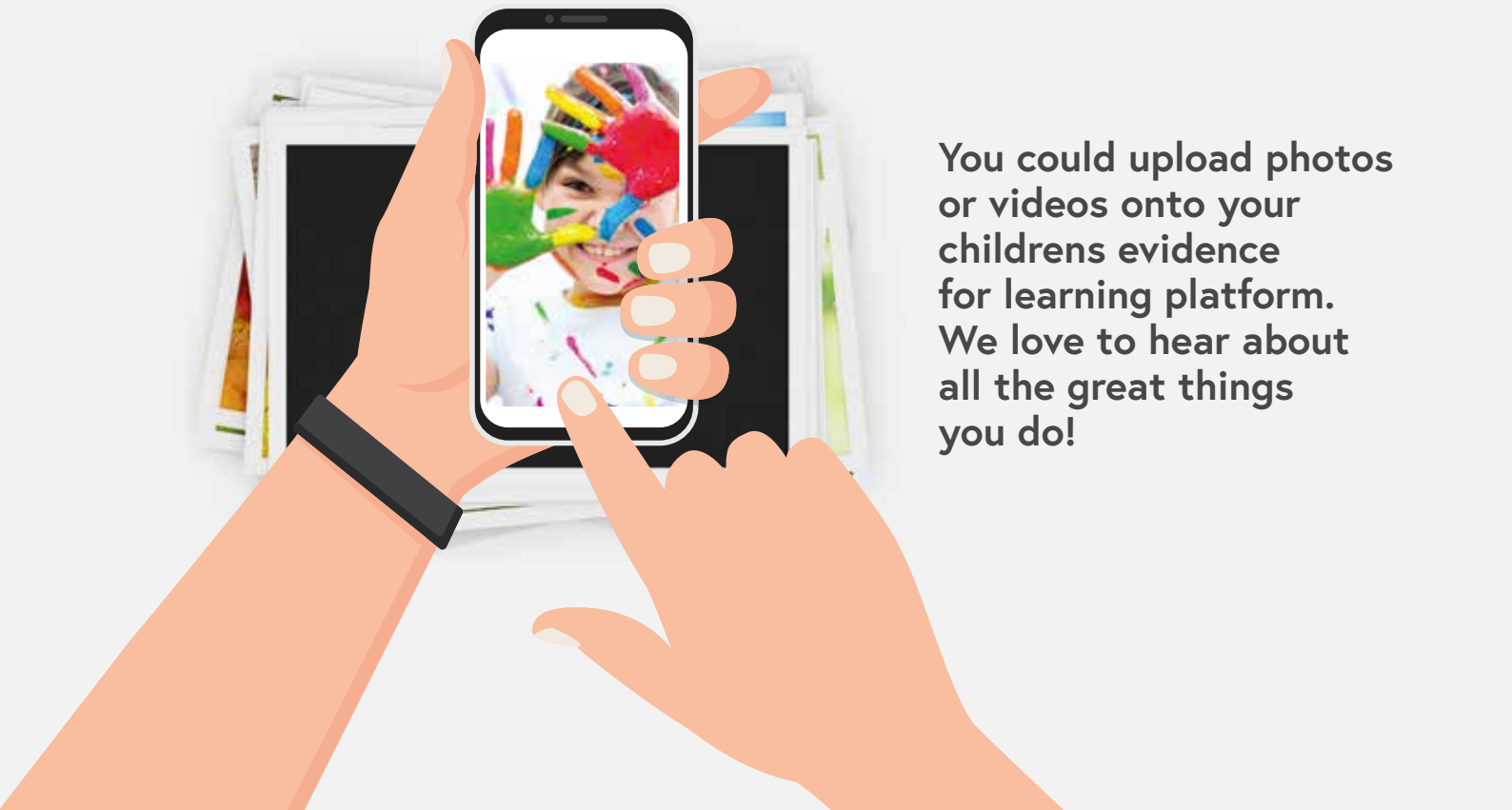
- had a bad night
- is not feeling 100%
- hasn't eaten
- has hurt themselves
- has had a change in family circumstances
- has experienced an event that may have impacted them
- has been given any medication and when
- is not themselves this morning



Different ways to support at home

Ongoing Partnership

We will share with you what we are working on at school, this can be done in a range of ways e.g. a curriculum map, newsletter, school website or an App. It is important that learning continues at home too, we may share ways in which you can work in partnership across a range of subjects to help your child maximise their learning and achieve their full potential.



You could upload photos or videos onto your childrens evidence for learning platform. We love to hear about all the great things you do!

Things parents and carers need to do

Application for School Transport

Parents must apply for school transport when they have a new school named if their child has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and requires travel assistance. If you move address or change schools, then a new application must be made. Please note you must live over the statutory walking distance to be eligible for any support. For children and young people aged 16 and over travel assistance has to be applied for annually and please be mindful of the Local Authority's travel policy before making a decision about a placement and consider how your child will attend as the Local Authority only offer Independent Travel Training or a Personal Travel Payment.



KEY DEADLINES

- For children aged 5 to 16, the deadline is 31 July each year.
- For young people aged 16 and over, the deadline is 30 June each year.

Late applications may result in transport not being in place for the start of the new school year. To ensure continuity of support, Somerset Council advises applying as soon as your child's school/college placement is confirmed.

Checklist of What to Prepare

- Completed application form
- Proof of EHCP
- Confirmation of school placement
- Any relevant medical information
- Contact details for any professionals involve



Transport Responsibilities

Transport can be a topic that can cause conflict and you can see both statutory guidance Home-to-school travel - GOV.UK and local policy by scanning the QR code.

There can be no guarantee that your child will be transported with the same driver/personal assistant/vehicle. All pupils are collected from pick-up points, parents and carers must accompany your child to the dedicated pick-up point and be there to collect the child at the end of the school day from the pick-up point.



The driver is not permitted to drop children at different addresses or for respite care.

WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT?	Parent/ Carer	School	LA
Provide travel assistance to children attending their nearest suitable provision, where they live over statutory walking distance (or are not able to walk to school, even if accompanied)	X	X	✓
If your child is ill, during the school day who needs to arrange to transport the child home?	✓	X	X
If your child is not taken into school by transport in the morning, who collects the child from school and transports them home?	✓	X	X
If your child needs to start school later or leave earlier who needs to arrange the transport and inform transport and school?	✓	X	X
If your child is ill and not coming into school, who lets transport and the school know?	✓	X	X
If there has been an issue on transport and for Health & Safety reasons the transport is not currently available, who needs to transport your child to and from school?	✓	X	X
If your child refuses to get into transport at the beginning or end of the school day and the transport leaves. Who needs to get your child to or home from school?	✓	X	X
If there is bad weather and the school closed early or is shut...?	X	X	✓
Picking up your child after a school after-school club?	✓	X	X
Renewing transport care plan each year?	✓	X	X



Apply for Free School Meals - Even If You Don't Use Them

Even if your child doesn't eat school meals every day, completing the Free School Meals (FSM) application form is really important. That's because it helps your child's school receive Pupil Premium (PP) funding - extra money from the government to support children's learning and well-being.

What Is Pupil Premium?

Pupil Premium is additional funding given to schools to help improve outcomes for children from lower-income families or those facing disadvantage.

It can be used for:

- Extra teaching support or interventions
- Access to clubs, trips, and enrichment activities
- Well-being and mental health support
- Learning resources and equipment

How You Can Help

By simply filling out the FSM form, even if your child brings a packed lunch or only occasionally has school meals, you could help unlock thousands of pounds in funding for your child's school.

It's quick, confidential, and makes a big difference.



Annual review process

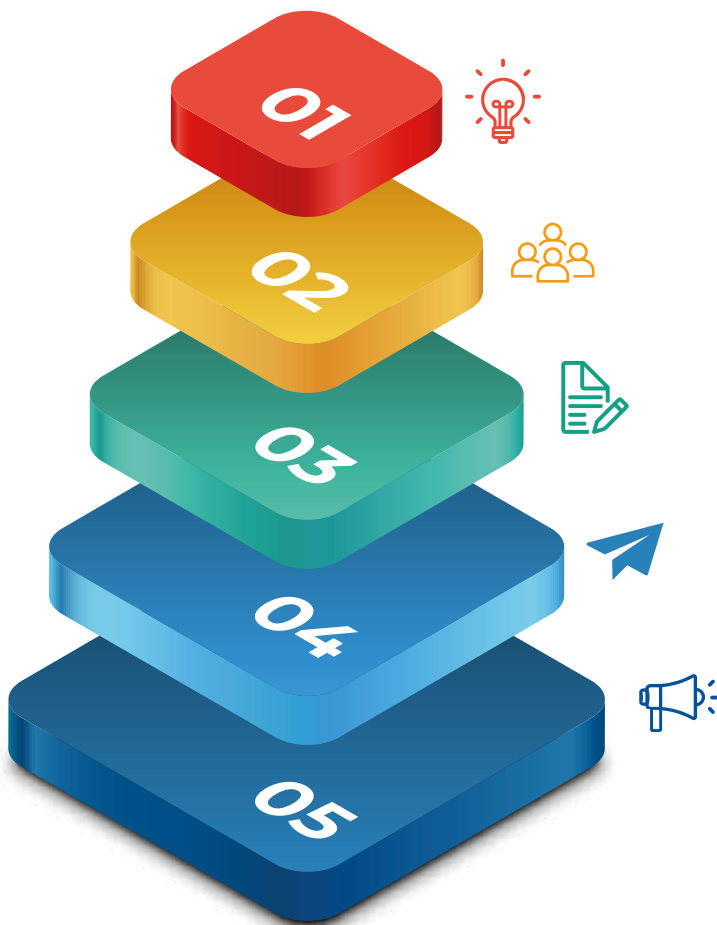
Annual Review Process for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Children with an EHCP in Somerset

Frequency

- For children under 5 reviews are recommended every 3 to 6 months, and then annually, to ensure the EHCP remains relevant and responsive to the child's needs.

Purpose of the Review

- To assess the child's progress toward the outcomes in their EHCP.
- To determine whether the current support and placement are still appropriate.
- To decide if any amendments to the EHCP are needed.



The 5-Step Annual Review Process

PREPARATION: The school or setting gathers information from observations and knowing the child well and contributions from relevant professionals and the family.

THE MEETING: A structured discussion involving parents/carers, educators, and professionals to discuss progress.

REPORT WRITING: The setting writes a report summarising the meeting and any proposed changes.

SUBMISSION: The report is sent to the Local Authority (LA).

LA DECISION: The LA decides whether to maintain, amend, or cease the EHCP and informs the family.

Phase Transfer Reviews

- If the child is moving from nursery to reception (called a phase transfer), the review should be held early in the spring term to ensure the EHCP is updated in time for the new setting.

Flexibility

- Parents and carers or settings can request an early review if there are significant changes in the child's needs or circumstances.

Use this snapshot to get to know me at a glance or share with any new professional.

Date

About Me

my picture

What I like to be called

How I like to communicate



What I'm good at and am interested in



Goals I'm working towards



Use this snapshot to get to know me at a glance or share with any new professional.

Things that trigger me



Things that calm me



My sensory dislikes



My sensory likes



People who are important to me

Name

Who they are to me

Phone / email





Glossary of Terms for Parents/Carers of Children with SEND

Here are some terms you may come across. Your setting may use others...

AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication): Encompasses various methods and tools used to support or replace spoken and written communication

Annual Review: A yearly meeting to review a child's Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) to ensure it meets their needs.

ASC (Autism Spectrum Condition): A developmental condition affecting communication, social interaction, and understanding of the world.

Behaviours that Challenge: Are actions or responses from a child that may be difficult to manage or understand. These behaviours often happen when a child is trying to communicate a need, emotion, or discomfort but doesn't yet have the words or skills to express it in another way.

CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) Somerset CAMHS: Services that assess and treat children and young people with emotional, behavioral, or mental health difficulties. www.somersetft.nhs.uk/camhs

Cognition and Learning (C&L): Support for children who learn at a slower pace than their peers, even with appropriate differentiation and support.

Code of Practice for SEND: Statutory guidance for local authorities and schools on supporting young people with SEND, aged 0-25 years.

Contact: the charity for families with disabled children: Is national charity that provides support, advice, and information to families with disabled children. contact.org.uk

Curriculum map: Visual representation that outlines the key components of a curriculum, showing what is taught.

CYPTS (Children and Young People's Therapy Services): Services that provide specialised support to children and young people with various needs, including physical, sensory, and occupational therapy. www.somersetft.nhs.uk/children-and-young-peoples-therapy-service/

CYPNP (Children and Young People's Neurodevelopmental Partnership): This service provides assessments and support for children and young people with neurodevelopmental conditions such as autism and ADHD. www.somerset.gov.uk/send/children-and-young-peoples-neurodevelopmental-partnership-cypnp/

Differentiated Curriculum: Tailoring teaching methods and resources to meet the individual needs of each student.

EAL (English as and Additional Language): Educational approach and support provided to students whose first language is not English.

www.somerset.gov.uk/children-families-and-education/the-local-offer/education-and-learning-support/english-as-an-additional-language-eal/

EHA (Early Help Assessment): Is a process designed to identify and address the needs of children, young people, and their families at the earliest opportunity.

www.somerset.gov.uk/children-families-and-education/the-local-offer/talking-to-people-finding-support/early-help-assessment-eha/

EHCP (Education, Health, and Care Plan): A legal document outlining the education, health, and social care support a child with SEND requires.

www.somerset.gov.uk/children-families-and-education/the-local-offer/education-health-and-care-plans/

EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage): Framework in the UK that sets the standards for the learning, development, and care of children from birth to five.

FIS (Family Intervention Service): Provides targeted support to children and young people from birth up to 18 years old and their families who are experiencing complex issues.

www.somerset.gov.uk/send/family-intervention-service/

IEP (Individual Education Plan): A plan developed for a child with SEND, detailing specific learning goals and the support needed to achieve them.

Inclusion: Ensuring that children with SEND can participate fully in school life and learning alongside their peers.

LSA (Learning Support Assistant): A staff member who supports children with SEND in the classroom.

Mainstream School: A school that provides education for all children, including those with SEND, within the general education system.

Multi-Agency Working: Collaboration between different services (e.g., education, health, social care) to support children with SEND.

OT (Occupational Therapy): Therapy to help children develop skills needed for daily living and learning.

PFSA (Parent & Family Support Advisor): A member of school staff whose role is to assist parents and families.

Pupil Premium: Grant provided by the UK government to state-funded schools in England. Its purpose is to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

SALT (Speech and Language Therapy): Therapy to support children with communication difficulties.

SEN (Special Educational Needs): Needs that require additional or different support from that provided to other children of the same age.

SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities): A term encompassing both special educational needs and disabilities.

SENDIAS (Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support) Somerset SENDIAS: Free, confidential, and impartial service that provides information, advice, and support to children, young people (up to the age of 25), and their parent carers regarding SEND
www.somerset.gov.uk/send/somerset-sendias/

SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator): A teacher responsible for coordinating support for children with SEND within a school.

Sensory and/or Physical Needs: Support for children with physical disabilities or sensory impairments (e.g., vision, hearing).

SEP (Student Education Plan): A personalised plan which outlines specific educational interventions and accommodations tailored to the student's unique requirement.

SPCF (Somerset Parent Carer Forum): Is run by parent/carers and is dedicated to ensuring that children with additional needs or disabilities receive the correct support and services to achieve their full potential.
www.somerset.gov.uk/send/somerset-parent-carer-forum-spcf/

TAC/TAF (Team around the child/family): Is a way of bringing together everyone who is supporting your child and family to work as a team.

Transition Plan: A plan to support a child with SEND as they move from one stage of education to another (e.g., primary to secondary school).

Visual Impairment (VI): A condition that affects a child's ability to see, requiring specific support and adaptations.

Virtual School (VS) Somerset Virtual School: Is a team made up of a range of experienced practitioners with a background in education, and with extensive knowledge and experience in SEND and additional vulnerability. It extends the purpose of the Virtual School in Somerset, which supports Children Looked After (CLA) and Previously Looked After Children (PLAC). Also supporting Children and Young People (CYP) with the most complex education situations from birth to adulthood across localities. It is committed to ensuring all Somerset CYP with acute needs and additional vulnerability, including Children Looked After (CLA) enjoy education and achieve good outcomes that prepares them well for adulthood - whether that be in a real school they attend, or an alternative education provision they access.
www.somersetvirtualschool.co.uk

These terms should help you navigate the various aspects of supporting a child with SEND in a Somerset school. If you have any questions or need further clarification, don't hesitate to reach out to your school's SENCO or other support staff.

SEND Information for parent carers and families

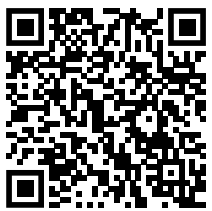
Somerset's SEND Local Offer is your go-to place for information about support and services for children and young people with additional needs.

To help you find what's most useful, the pages are grouped by age:

- If your child is still in an early years setting (like nursery or preschool), start with the Early Years section: www.somerset.gov.uk/the-local-offer/early-years-0-to-5-years
- Once your child starts school, the Primary years section will be more relevant: www.somerset.gov.uk/the-local-offer/primary-school-5-to-11-years



You're welcome to explore both sections at any time - there's no wrong place to start. Each one includes helpful information like your rights at work, inclusive family activities, getting help and support and key services available at different stages of your child's journey.



For young people with additional needs, a little extra planning can help make outings enjoyable and accessible. The Leisure section of Somerset's SEND Local Offer describes accessible places to go, inclusive things to do and help getting around. This includes an events calendar, as well as discount and activity passes so you can find local affordable activities. The Community Inclusion and Activity Team organises a calendar of accessible activities during both term time and school holidays. www.somerset.gov.uk/leisure

SEND Somerset's
Local Offer

Early years planning - SEED Framework

In the early years there is already so much happening for families, that we do not try to "solve" everything at once. We are simply 'planting a SEED' about the type of planning that will matter later. Having a framework like this is incredibly valuable, because these four themes capture almost all of the ways that money can go wrong for SEND families if early choices are not protected. SEED gives parents the right direction from the very beginning, without adding pressure too soon.

This section gives an early introduction to the core financial themes that will matter later for families, in a way that is gentle and not overwhelming.

SEED Framework (Early Years) When families first enter specialist education, it is helpful to gently introduce the idea that future financial planning will look different for a child with additional needs. A simple structure that works well is the SEED Framework:

Savings

Consider saving money in your name, not your child's, in order to have accessible, safe funds available for your young person, which will not negatively impact any vital means-tested care or support they may need.

Be aware you can have per person to £6,000 and there is no impact on your Universal Credit payments. £6,001 to £16,000: Universal Credit is reduced. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) applies a "tariff income": For every £250 (or part thereof) above £6,000, they assume you have £4.35 per month extra income. This amount is deducted from your Universal Credit payment.

Entitlements

Families should understand which benefits, grants and funded support are available, so you are not missing out on help. A simple check with calculators such as Turn2us or Entitledto.co.uk will help.

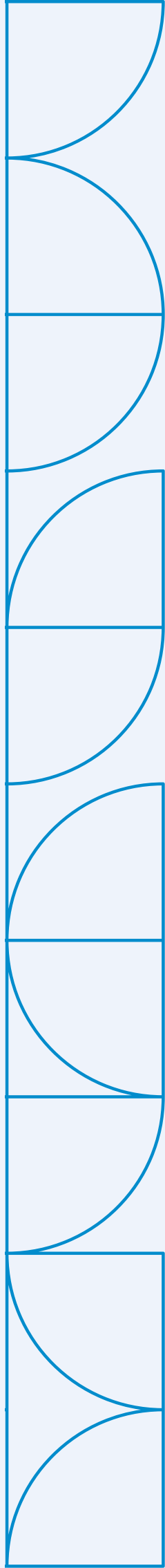
Estate Planning

Wills and Special Needs Trusts can protect your young person in adulthood and ensure their inheritance is held safely. Families are often shocked to understand that young people who may lack capacity are 'locked out' of an inheritance. Many parents worry about their young person being susceptible to financial abuse with the money in their hands. The right trusts in place, safeguard the young person.

Decision Making

Families need to understand how decision-making works when the child cannot make financial decisions for themselves. When their child turns 18, their automatic parental right to make decisions for their young person stops.

This framework introduces the foundations clearly and calmly in the early years, without overwhelming families - and it creates a base that can be expanded on as the young person gets older.





Created in partnership with: Brookside Academy . Critchill School . Fairmead School .
Fiveways School . Hill View School . Holway Park School . The Mendip School . Polden Bower School .
Selworthy School . Somerset Parent Carer Forum . Yeovil Opportunity Group.