

# FINDING THE RIGHT SUPPORT - INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

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## How to make best use of your local offer and find the information you need

If your child has a sensory impairment, how do you know what support and services are available to you?

This short guide has been produced to help you find out what should be offered in your local area.

### 1. What is the local offer?

Local offers were introduced in England in September 2014 and many are still developing. There should be information about the sorts of services you can access, but the actual service and provision will depend on your child's individual needs and what is available locally.

Every local authority must identify the education, health and social care services in their local area that are provided for children and young people from birth to 25 years who have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), and their families, and include them in an information directory called the local offer. This will help local authorities to identify gaps in provision. The local offer also needs to include information about services provided outside your local area that local children are likely to use.

Your local authority also needs local early years settings, schools, colleges, health services and other service providers to contribute to the local offer.

### 2. How do you know what services you should have?

Local services should reflect what local people need. The details of what the local offer should include and who should be consulted are set out in law. The local offer should have been developed in consultation with young people, parents and practitioners and informed by available information about the local population, such as the number of people with sensory impairments. Your local authority should also ask how you think people should be able to access it. This means that local authorities must involve parents in planning decisions about what services for children with SEND are needed. Most authorities will have worked with their local Parent Carer Forum/Independent Support Service to develop this.

The local offer needs to be kept up to date, and so your local authority will need to seek feedback from children, young people and parents as part of that process. Local authorities will have to ask parents things like:

- Are there enough services in the local area to give you the support you need?
- Are there any particular services you need which are not currently available in the local area?
- How do you want to be told about the services that are available locally?

They must also publish what children, young people and parents tell them about their local offer and say clearly what they will do about the comments they receive.

As a child with SEND, your child has rights. These include the right to involve a qualified teacher of sensory impairment (hearing or vision or both) in their assessment so that someone who understands their needs can support you. They will also be a good source of information on local services and how to access your local offer.

### 3. How do you go about finding out about this information?

All local authorities must publish their local offer to explain what services are available for children and young people with sensory impairments and how to access them. The local offer is available online, but sometimes may be hard to find.

- a. The most helpful search terms we have found include

Name of area (county, borough or unitary authority)

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Local offer

This should take you to your local offer page.

- b. Local offers should have a filter. It can be helpful to further filter the results using combinations of the following search terms

Sensory impairment

Vision or visual Impairment

Hearing impairment or deaf

Multi or dual sensory impairment or deafblind

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Children or young people

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Services or education or school

- c. There is a website that has a list of local offers

<http://bringingustogether.org.uk/but-projects/true-consultation/local-offer-in-your-area/>

(please note this is an independent site and NatSIP is not responsible for the content)

If you do not know your local authority, you can check on <https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council>.

If you do not have easy access to the internet, you could try your local library, school, college or local citizens' advice bureau.

### 4. How can you get involved?

You have a right to comment on the content of your local offer and get a reply from the local authority. For example, if you do not find a service that you think you need, you should be able to post a comment about the services available on the local offer site. Authorities have a responsibility to respond to these comments and say what they are going to do about it.

This is a useful strategy if you (and perhaps other parents) make a comment about what is missing. This opens a discussion between the services and local people.

Look for a 'contact us', 'feedback' or 'let us know' button or tab to post your comment.

You might also ask if there are local offer development meetings.

If you want to know about what sorts of services you could be accessing, NatSIP has produced two guides to the local offer:

a) Including sensory services in the local offer (June 2014)<sup>1</sup>

This is aimed at local authority officers who are developing the local offer. The purpose is to ensure that local authority/Clinical Commissioning Group officers understand the importance of maintaining specialist services for children and young people (CYP) with SI. It sets out the key information on services for CYP with SI and their parent carers.

b) Creating confidence in local services: NatSIP guidance to support the development of the local offer for children and young people with sensory impairment (May 2014)<sup>2</sup>

This sets out what practitioners in the sector have agreed good service provision should look like. It should inform an ongoing review of the services available for children and young people with sensory impairment in the local offer. This review should be carried out annually in line with SEND guidance. NatSIP's expectation is that the local offer is developed within a framework of core principles and adopts the regulatory framework and broader guidance of the local offer. 'Creating confidence' has a list of indicators which you might want to use to ask questions about the sorts of services on offer.

## 5. Other useful guidance

The following organisations can provide information on the sort of services your child might access

- If you have a hearing impairment - NDCS  
<http://www.ndcs.org.uk>
- If you have a vision impairment, RNIB has a directory of local authority vision impairment services available through local offer web sites  
<http://www.rnib.org.uk/insight-online/finding-local-support-families-children-vi>
- If you have a multi-sensory impairment – Sense  
<http://www.sense.org.uk>

If you want another way to find out about the services that may be available to help, you can also contact your local SEND information, advice and guidance service which should be able to inform you about the support available in your area through the Special Educational Needs and Disability Information and Advice Service (SENDIASS) <http://www.iassnetwork.org.uk/>.

The Council for Disabled Children also has information to give parents a broad overview of the local offer <http://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/resources/the-local-offer-explained>.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/doc-library-login/doc\\_details/778-02-including-sensory-services-in-the-local-offer](https://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/doc-library-login/doc_details/778-02-including-sensory-services-in-the-local-offer)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/doc-library-login/doc\\_details/752-01-local-offer-creating-confidence-in-services](https://www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/doc-library-login/doc_details/752-01-local-offer-creating-confidence-in-services)