



Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)

Understanding SENDIASS for professionals

SENDIASS provides the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service in County Durham.

Who we are.

SENDIASS provides information, advice, and support (IAS) to children and young people with any type of special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) and their parents and carers that is:

- Free
- Confidential and
- Impartial.

We have a range of experienced and trained staff delivering the statutory information advice and support service local authorities must offer. This is in line with the expectation of the principles for SENDIASS services set within the SEND Code of Practice guidance [SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) 2.1, 2.2,2.8.

We are a service provided by Durham County Council however we work at arm's length from the Local Authority to provide an impartial and confidential service.

Our goals at **SENDIASS** are to:

Provide information, advice, support, and training.

Work together.

Promote participation.

Enable decision making.

Empower parents/carers and young people 16-25.

How do we reach our goals?

We offer support to parents and carers who have children and young people (CYP) aged 0-25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in line with the requirements of the Children and Families Act 2014.

We work closely with Parent/Carer Forums, other parent groups, voluntary sector services and organisations in each authority.

We deliver an accessible service with information electronically available on our website and Facebook page for all families, including professionals working with children and young people with SEND, parent, and carers.

We promote working together, participation and decision making through communication of information, advice, and support.

Who can use SENDIASS?

Young people ages 16-25 with SEND can use our service independently to ensure their views are shared, they understand educational processes and can contribute to decisions about their future.

Parents and carers with parental responsibility can use SENDIASS to understand their own and their children and young people with SEND's rights, as well as processes and policies. They can also use our service to support them with practical guidance and support in voicing their views.

Professionals can use the information advice and support on offer to build their own knowledge and understanding. They can also enable young people as well as parents and carers to access SENDIASS.

Partnership Working with Professionals.

Professionals have the option of contacting SENDIASS for information on SEND across education, health and social care related to education or training.

Professionals working together should aim to empower parents/carers and provide information, advice, and support for them to be able to engage, participate and make decisions.

Parent/carers should also be supported to express themselves and their child's views, wishes and feelings in a clear way, with confidence.

Parent/carers should be encouraged to contact the service themselves.

Professionals can:

- **Contact** Durham SENDIASS to learn about the purpose of a SENDIASS, and the information, advice, and support service that we offer.
- **Work** with SENDIASS by supporting their own families to access the SENDIASS website where they can find resources and our contact form.
- **Help** parent/carers who need additional support to fill the contact form on our website.

- **Help SENDIASS provide** effective information, advice, and support to parent/carers by being clear about **any additional support needs** individuals may have. This will mean that we are able to adjust how we make information available. For example, parents and carers, foster parents or others may need shorter meetings or simplified information.
- **Work in partnership** with SENDIASS to support children and young people with special educational needs and their parents/carers, in enabling children and young people with SEND to feel heard and have their needs met.

What we cover.

Our service covers all aspects of special educational needs and disabilities from promoting inclusion to social care and health concerns, appeals, complaints, and exclusions where SEND may be identified.

- The Graduated Approach to SEND (Special Educational Needs & Disability) Support in early years, school, or college.
- Improving communication with educational settings, local authority, health, and social care.
- Transition between educational settings, phased transfer or moving between Children and Adults services.
- Advice about Durham County Council transport.
- EHCP application and needs assessment.
- Annual Review of Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- Mediation.
- Appeals to Tribunal for refusal to assess for an EHCP, refusal to issue an EHCP, contents of an EHCP, placement and ceasing to maintain an EHCP.
- Suspension, permanent exclusion.
- Disability discrimination.
- Resolving disputes and complaints.
- Health and social care queries related to the child or young person's SEND.
- Attendance, part-time timetables and not in full time education.
- School admissions.
- Home education.
- Alternative provisions.
- Personal budgets.
- Education Other Than At School (EOTAS).
- Anti-bullying.
- School trips and visits.
- Clarifying misinformation.
- Complaints procedures.

What we do.

- Provide a SENDIASS website for information and advice.
- Provide a range of information resources.
- Provide a dedicated telephone helpline.
- Provide a telephone appointment so we can understand and determine support to meet your needs.
- Provide a dedicated email enquiry service.
- Provide SENDIASS drop-in sessions within the Family Hubs across County Durham.
- Provide a Facebook page for information.
- Attend SEND events where possible.
- Work in partnership with MCT Durham Parent Carer Forum.
- Provide workshops, and information sessions to support your learning in specific SEND topics.
- Promote self-advocacy by empowering parents/carers/young people to feel confident to express their views.
- Assist parents/carers/young people to understand statutory SEND processes and policies within the Graduated Approach to SEND.
- Help parents/carers/young people to understand how to exercise their rights.
- Explain jargon.
- Enable parents/carers/young people to be more confident when communicating with professionals.
- Support parents/carers to understand their options so that they can make informed decisions.
- Help parents/carers/young people to prepare for meetings.
- Help parents/carers/young people to navigate the SEND Appeal & Tribunal Process.
- May accompany parents/carers to meetings and tribunals. Please see 'Support at Meetings & Tribunals Document for further details and terms when this applies.
- Provide templates and example letters for paperwork.
- Navigate and signpost to local and national sources of information, advice, and support, including the Local Offer.

What we DO NOT do.

- Offer counselling. Enquiries must be based around a question related to SEND.
- Deliver emergency support and interventions.
- Make decisions for the parent/carer or young person.
- Attend all meetings. Please see 'Support at Meetings & Tribunals Document for further details and terms when this applies.
- Routinely arrange meetings with the family's or on their behalf*
- Take minutes at meetings.
- Routinely write letters or emails on your behalf*
- Routinely complete paperwork on your behalf*

- Routinely read or check EHC Plans.
- Spend disproportionate amount of time readdressing an enquiry that has already been addressed by our service.
- Complete DLA or PIP forms.
- Home visits*
- Routinely provide transport to meetings or school visits*
- Hold power over Local Authority or school policies, practices, or procedures.

*Unless the parent/carer have additional support needs that mean they cannot undertake these actions independently and we have agreed that we have the capacity to support them at that time.

Additional Support Needs

The aim of SENDIASS is always to enable parents/carers and young people to make confident, independent, and informed decisions. We will therefore assess every situation to understand the level of support required.

This includes those where the parent/carer has additional support needs. This ensures that we only provide support that builds confidence rather than support that promotes reliance on SENDIASS.

Please ask parents & carers to tell us if they need any additional support during their first contact with us, this could be by using our contact form, telephone, or email. The sooner we know the better we can help them.

Attending meetings

Our aim is to enable parents & carers to participate independently in meetings following our input. However, attending meetings is part of the service that we offer when it is necessary.

SENDIASS may agree to attend where the following has been established first.

- There is no other friend or family member who can attend with the parent / carer.
- The parent/carer has disclosed a learning difficulty, mental health difficulty or disability which prevents them from being able to put across their views independently.
- The young person (16-25) has requested independent support.
- There are other access requirements that need to be addressed, for example, English is an additional language for the parent/carer.

- The meeting is a tribunal hearing.

Protocol when parents/carers are in crisis.

SENDIASS is not an emergency service.

There may be times that we, or families, need to raise a Child Protection or Safeguarding concern by informing the Local Authority Children and/or Adult Services as per Safeguarding procedures.

[First Contact: Report a concern about a child \(Durham County Council\)](#)

When SENDIASS is not available you may also want to seek advice or support from:

- [Local Offer Special educational needs and disabilities \(SEND\) and our Local Offer - Durham County Council](#)
- [IPSEA \(IPSEA\) Independent Provider of Special Education Advice](#)
- [Contact: the charity for families with disabled children](#)
- [CAMHS crisis Crisis and liaison service for children and young people - Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- [Durham Carers Support](#)
- [Family Hubs](#)

How to contact SENDIASS

We will respond to each enquiry within 3-5 working days.

Please use one of the methods below to contact SENDIASS. Please do not use more than one method of contact.

- If you have not contacted us before, or not for at least six months - please complete our [Contact form](#) as a first step. This will allow us to best respond to your enquiry. You can find other ways to get in touch on our [Contact Us](#) page.
- If you have contacted the service more recently, or you are having trouble completing the form you can still contact us in the following ways.
 - Phone: 0191 5873541 or 03000 267007
 - Email: sendiass@durham.gov.uk