

Engaging with Parent Carers

A free toolkit for Worcestershire Schools

Supporting schools to build positive relationships with their parents and carers of children with SEND



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Arrow Vale Central Region Schools Trust
Bengeworth CE Academy
Eckington CE First School
Families in Partnership
Herefordshire and Worcestershire Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)
Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Primary School
St Bede's Catholic Middle School
St Luke's CE First School
The Coppice Primary School and Nursery
Walkwood CE Middle School
Westlands First School and Nursery
Wyre Forest SEND School
Worcestershire County Council SEND Services
Worcestershire County Council Parent/Carer Stakeholder Group



Introduction

Engaging with parents is an everyday and important aspect of school life. Schools routinely work with and consult parents in a range of ways and for a variety of reasons. Developing a positive and trusting relationship with your parent community is a key focus for any school, irrespective of your setting type, your learners' ages, or your subject specialism.

'The most important people in any child or young person's life are their parents. You know your children best of all. What you as parents think, feel and say is important. You should be listened to and you need to be fully involved in decisions that affect your children.'

*Edward Timpson - Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families August 2014
Foreword in Special educational needs and disability - A guide for parents and carers*

Uniquely for your SEND students, school engagement with their parent carers is explicitly laid out in the SEND Code of Practice which recognises that SEND children and their families have a valuable role to play in every aspect of school.

'In particular, parents know their children best and it is important that all professionals listen and understand when parents express concerns about their child's development.'

'Consideration of whether special educational provision is required should start with the desired outcomes, including the expected progress and attainment and the views and wishes of the pupil and their parents.'

Chapter 6 SEND Code of Practice

Parent carers of SEND students tell us they can feel isolated and on the fringes of the broader school community. Parent carers can often be labelled as anxious and frequently feel misunderstood or judged. This toolkit looks to support schools to improve their understanding and engagement with their parent carers, and includes a range of ideas, best practice, practical examples, and tools to help you. The toolkit will help you reflect on your current practices, consider alternative approaches and most importantly, help you support and enable your parent carers to be fully involved.

The mainstay of the guide is co-production and the importance of schools proactively involving their parent carer community, working together to improve outcomes for their children, by actively listening to deepen their understanding. Co-production is more than consulting, it is a shared experience, where parents are equal partners and co-authors of decisions – not just relating to their child, but in all aspects of school life.

Co-production

The principles set out in **Chapter one of the SEND Code of Practice 2015**, and echoed in Chapter six, state that we must have regard to: 'the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person, and the child's parents' and 'the importance of the child or young person, and the child's parents, participating as fully as possible in decisions, and being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions.'

Engaging with parent carers through co-production brings about shared aims and improved outcomes for SEND children – so why wouldn't we do it? It is essential to remember that parent carers know their children best, children with SEND often mask at school, frequently only revealing their true self in the safety of their home. Schools therefore do not always get to see the whole child and so the right support is not put in place.

This guide is an example of what can be achieved by working together, it has been co-produced with colleagues from schools, Families in Partnership - parent carer forum, members of WCC's Parent/carer Stakeholder Group, SENDIASS and Worcestershire County Council SEND Services. All the parties involved have been able to contribute to the advice, ideas, and ethos, and have gained from the experience. We have included quotes from everyone involved which reflect their thoughts on not only the guide itself, but value of the process used to develop it and what they've taken from it.

'Working on this toolkit has encouraged me to reflect on current practices in school and made me more proactive in strengthening links with parent carers.'

SENCO Westlands First School

'The sessions provided a forum in which to share, review and implement creative ways of further developing parental/carer engagement, whilst maintaining effective, honest and transparent relationships at the heart of our work. Through discussion and collaborative working, the Parent carer Engagement in Schools Working Group, were able to review the current context of parent/carer engagement and make suggestions on how provision in school could provide the best possible outcomes for the families which it serves.'

SENCO Bengeworth CE Academy

I am excited by the ideas and examples of good practice included in this toolkit. I'm looking forward to working with my child's school to look at ways we can involve parent carers and see some of these ideas in action.'

Parent carer of a SEND child in a Worcestershire primary school

'I really looked forward to sessions to discuss strategies and engagement. I have really enjoyed being part of the working group and I have learnt so much!'

Team Leader Arrow Vale Central Region Schools Trust

'This process has allowed us to network with other family support workers which has allowed us to bounce idea's back and forth about good practice and different ideas for increasing parent carer engagement. The process has highlighted to us that, as an SEN school, our parent carer needs are very high and because of this our roles in supporting are extremely diverse and can often lead to us having to think outside the box.'

Family Support Workers Wyre Forest SEND School

'Parent engagement is one the key factors in securing higher student motivation, well-being, and achievement. Working in partnership with parents to ensure parents have a voice in decision-making issues that affect them enables schools to meet the needs of the communities they serve more effectively. The parent carer engagement in school working group has been an excellent forum in which as a school we have been able to reflect on current practices, celebrate successes and identify areas in which we can improve through collaborative discussions on understanding methods used across the county.'

SENCO Walkwood CE Middle School

'SENDIASS advise and support professionals and families, the feedback we receive makes it clear that a positive, constructive relationship between school and parents makes a difference to how a child progresses within education. SENDIASS Training has developed a workshop for this toolkit so everyone can have a clear understanding of it and benefit from effective parent carer engagement within schools.'

HW SENDIASS

'Working within the cohort has encouraged me to reflect on practices and provided me with a platform to be more proactive in linking with parents.'

SENCO Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Primary School

'It's been really great being involved with this project, the toolkit is brilliant and we, as a school, will definitely be using it.'

SENCO The Coppice Primary School and Nursery

'Families in Partnership is the parent carer forum for Worcestershire, and we are pleased that this toolkit has been developed together, with everyone who is involved with parent carer engagement within schools. This has been a good example of how effective co-production can be, being able to discuss the challenges parent carers face and work collaboratively to come up with solutions. Having a positive relationship with school can make such a difference to all families who have a child with SEND.'

Families in Partnership

'Being part of The Working Group has enabled me to reflect on our current practices in a small rural school, strengthen my understanding of best practice and identify ways to move forward. It has been an invaluable opportunity to share with fellow professionals across the county.'

SENCO Eckington E First School



Rationale

Worcestershire County Council and partners, through its SEND Improvement Programme, is committed to working with its SEND families, actively listen to what they have to say and to develop services which reflect need. This is a fundamental principle which underpins the SEND Code of Practice:

An extract from the SEND Code of Practice Foreword:

‘This new Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice will play a vital role in underpinning the major reform programme.

For children and young people this means that their experiences will be of a system which is less confrontational and more efficient. Their special educational needs and disabilities will be picked up at the earliest point with support routinely put in place quickly, and their parents will know what services they can reasonably expect to be provided. Children and young people and their parents or carers will be fully involved in decisions about their support and what they want to achieve.’

Dr Dan Poulter - Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health

Edward Timpson - Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families

SEND Code of Practice January 2015

Engagement and the Law

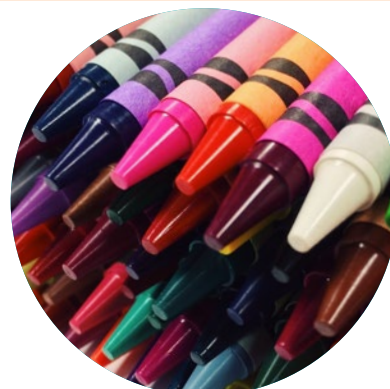
Engagement and inclusion are enshrined in the [Children and Families Act 2014](#), the [SEND code of practice 2015](#) and the [Equality Act 2010](#).

Government have produced useful guidance for schools about the [Equalities Act \(EA\) advice for schools](#). It contains a summary of what teachers need to know and do to prevent and address inequalities. Schools have a range of duties under the act to staff, pupils, parents and other school users. The guide covers all areas of discrimination, including a chapter on disability, and shows how it underpins subsequent legislation and should work alongside it.

The Council for Disabled Children has also recently produced useful guidance for schools about the Equality Act which contains examples of discrimination and ways schools can avoid bad practice. [Equality Act Guide for schools - CDC](#). The guide underlines the value that inclusive practice has for the whole school, and for society as a whole:

‘However, schools that provide high-quality inclusive provision for all pupils; that work in close consultation with parents and pupils themselves; that make adjustments to ensure disabled pupils participate in all aspects of school life; that accept and celebrate difference; and that do not compromise aspirations for disabled pupils are likely to realise benefits for disabled pupils as well as pupils who are not disabled. The experience of growing up together, with an appreciation of diversity, is important preparation for life beyond the school gates and can contribute to a fairer society.’

Equality Act 2010: advice for schools



Annual SEND parent carer survey

.....

Worcestershire have had an annual SEND parent carer survey which was one of the ways that Worcestershire County Council asked for feedback about services for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The survey asked parent carers about different services from across health, social care and education. In the survey there were questions about how much parents feel their views are taken into account and how well they feel they are communicated with. In the past their comments and ratings have been responded to in the form of a 'You said, we did' report. [SEND Local Offer | Your feedback so far](#)

The results from the Education section of the 2022 survey show us that there is significant room for improvement when parent carers who have been through the EHC Assessment process were asked about whether they felt that school communicated well with them and that their views were taken into account.

When schools actively listen and understand the full profile of a pupil there is a better outcome for the child. Collaboration helps remove barriers to learning and improves attendance. An understanding of the barriers and why children may have difficulty with attendance is an essential part of improving outcomes.

When parent carers were asked in the survey 'What else could your school, early years setting, or education provider do to support you and your child?'

Parent carers have consistently said that good communication and engagement with parents is something that schools could do which would better support them and their child.

Quotes from parent carers about communication with school:

'I have found the staff at X School have always been fantastic with listening to any concerns I may have, and go above and beyond to help my child with any anxiety they may face – helping as much as possible during the school day and communicate with me over any possible issues to do what is best in my child's interest.'

'You need to know that schools may hear parents and children's views, but they do not listen to them. They do it as a course of procedure rather than with the intention of changing how they do things. Schools work in their own interests and what will make their jobs easier, not necessarily what will make the child thrive. A whole school attitude shift needs to happen in mainstream schools urgently.'

'We have got a lot of experience with primary school and nurseries, when our child's attention and communication was different. Before they started school the headteacher, teachers and SENDCo spent a lot of time to discuss with us their needs. The most important thing was that all information was used to make their start easier and help them to settle down. In nursery and reception every single day I had feedback what was going on and what will be next. All the time I felt that teachers listen to us and try to find proper ways for their learning which was especially difficult as they are a Polish speaking autistic child. At the moment they are in Year 2...and they absolutely love school.'

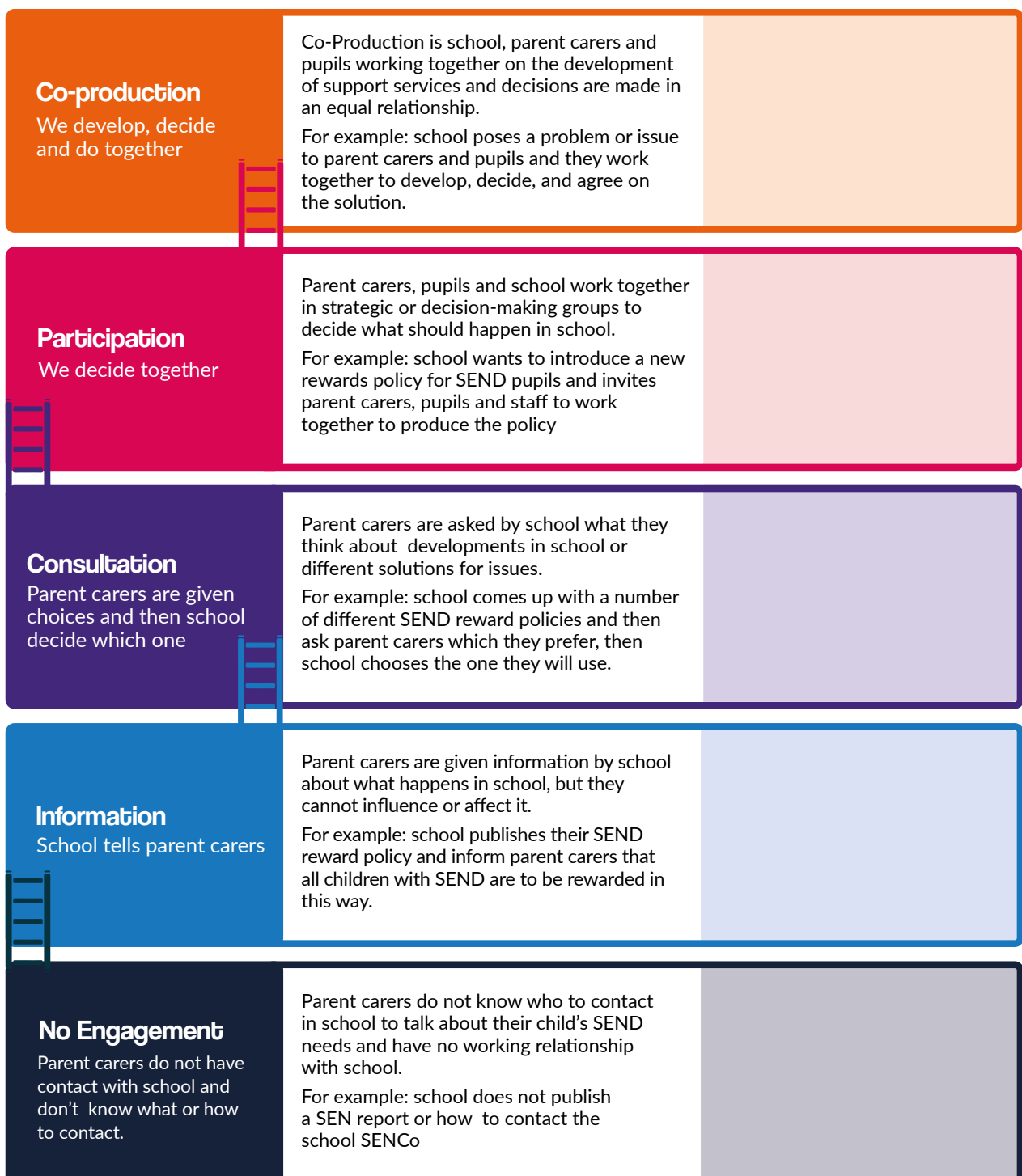
'I couldn't have done the Umbrella Pathway without you. Everyone I have dealt with at my child's school has been brilliant with me and my child. It's outstanding the help we have had.'

'The connection between school, pupils and parents gets lost after First School until it's too late.'

Participation Ladder

Worcestershire have adopted a model of engagement called the Ladder of Participation, which reflects the different levels of people’s involvement in developing services. We have used this ladder to reflect the different ‘rungs’ of participation a school can use to engage with their parent carers and what each rung could look like when used as part of the co-production process. When co-producing you will move up and down the ladder and be on different rungs at different points. All the methods have value, when used as part of co-production, but if used in isolation, you would not be co-producing. You can use this diagram to reflect on where you are currently as a school, and where you would aim to be. It’s also useful to share it with your parent carers and see where they think you are on the ladder.

Currently Doing / Not Doing



Benefits of engagement

Parent carers who feel that their views are valued by their child's school are more likely to work in partnership with them, helping the school to understand and therefore better support their child's needs.

It is widely acknowledged that parental involvement both in their child's learning and in the life of the school has a positive effect on pupil achievement and behaviour. We have included links to some of the research in the **Further Reading** section if you would like to find out more.

Ofsted's Self Evaluation Form (SEF) requires schools to provide evidence of how they gather the views of parents and students on their experiences of being involved in decision making as well as the quality of the service they receive. Evidence of lessons learned, and action taken in response to these views are also sought in the evaluation.

If your parent carers are more involved with school life and their child's learning, then the children will be too. It's about working together to achieve the best outcomes for the children and young people and having conversations will help to achieve them. Parents and schools should work together to gain a clear understanding of the individual child's needs relating to behaviour and mental health (so that adults can support effectively to increase positive holistic outcomes for the child, enabling them to thrive within both environments).

'Schools need to take on board what the parent is saying - they know their child best' *Parent carer*

Benefits of parent carer engagement to schools



Benefits of engagement to parent carers



Developing your strategies and approaches

As a school you are probably already doing some of what's included in this toolkit, so it's not about starting from scratch, but more about developing your strategies and approaches. It's thinking about how you engage with parent carers and how that differs from the whole school population. We will be looking at ways for you to develop and grow your relationships with parent carers.

When you are thinking about your parent carers, it's important to remember that they do not always recognise themselves as a carers and therefore may not seek the additional support available. It's important to talk about how their parenting role differs from other parents and signpost them to organisations like SENDIASS, who can help and support them, and direct them to the ['Who to contact for advice and guidance' page on the Local Offer](#).



Search site

Welcome to SENDIASS

We are the SEND Information, Advice and Support Service covering Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

Here at HW SENDIASS we have a dedicated team of advisors offering legally-based and easily accessible information and advice about special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

We support parents, carers, children and young people with SEND and our service is impartial and confidential.

Help us improve our website

We are keen to ensure that the content and layout of our website meets your needs. We value your feedback in helping us to improve it.

[Complete our short website survey](#) >



About Us

- > What we do
- > Our team
- > Minimum standards for IASS
- > Download our leaflet



Information

- > Early years
- > Admissions
- > SEND, Support & EHCPs
- > Resolving disagreements/ Making a complaint
- > Mediation and Tribunal
- > Education Otherwise Than at School (EOTAS)
- > Transport
- > Health



Resources

- > Factsheets & guides
- > Newsletters
- > Policies
- > Videos
- > Glossary



Training

- > Training Offer
- > Parent Carer Survey Report
- > Workshops for Parents and Carers
- > Workshops for Professionals
- > Events

[SENDIASS Worcestershire and Herefordshire \(hwsendiass.co.uk\)](http://hwsendiass.co.uk)

Establishing effective relationships and communication

We know, you know that before an effective relationship with parent carers can be established there needs to be one to one interaction, something to build on and grow. We want this toolkit to help and support this, it includes the important elements for schools to consider about their engagement with parent carers, and how that is different to their engagement with all parents.

Schools are a valuable source of information, and so are parent carers.

Parent carers are looking for guidance and help and can sometimes assume that school have all the answers, so it's important to be approachable and relaxed.

It's hard to give the right answers if you haven't understood the question, so there needs to be clear channels of communication and no assumptions about what is being said. Sometimes it's not the presenting problem, which is the real issue, often there can be other issues beneath that need to be understood and having good channels of communication can help with this.

Parent carers should feel they are part of the process and part of the solution, that they are equal partners.

Parent carers will have essential information about their child that the school doesn't have, and an important part of the process is exploring and discovering what this information is. Parents know their child best, what support or help they need, what their triggers are, what has worked or not worked in the past and school needs to know and understand this so they can support and help their pupil.

'Please listen to the parents. Not every child plays up in school, sometimes the school environment produces sensory overload after the school day.' *Parent carer*

Any relationship needs to be based on trust and this may have been undermined at a previous setting – sometimes the journey your parent carers have been on up to this point hasn't been smooth. Time needs to be given to establishing the relationship and gaining trust, so it's important to do what you promise you will do, ask about their opinions, and show you are listening to the answers.

Ask and be clear about the way a parent wants to be communicated with, bear in mind that some parents could have additional needs themselves, and therefore have rights under the Equality Act. Some parents will prefer written information so they can have time to process it, while others prefer face-to-face and verbal feedback. Some parent carers may feel more comfortable if they attend meetings with someone else, a friend or advocate, so you need to be clear that it's okay, or perhaps even suggest it.

Schools must be clear about who makes the decisions in school, who is responsible for arranging support and who parent carers should contact. There should be a clear published policy on responding to communication from parent carers, within a time frame. Consideration needs to be given who the point of contact is for parent carers, and if this is going to change (e.g. maternity leave) then this needs to be communicated in a proactive and clear way.



The World of SEND

In the early stages of diagnosis parent carers can come to school for answers and explanations as everything is new to them. Many families feel they are left to find out things for themselves once they have a diagnosis and the world of SEND has its own language, personnel, services and ways of doing things. It's often all new to the parents and they are bombarded with information and introduced to an unfamiliar world. They can be unsure of what to do, where they can go, what they can do to help their child and may need lots of support and information from the school.

To help you to help parent carers to navigate this new world and foster positive relationships we have included links below to Worcestershire's SEND Local Offer which can be shared with your parent carers.

Parent carers may find they are introduced to a myriad of new services, which can be confusing and create anxiety/concern if they are unsure what they are.

There is a useful guide to what professionals a child may come into contact with, on the SEND Local Offer [Professionals and services your child may meet on their SEND journey | SEND Local Offer](#).

We have also included in the appendix a short guide '[Guide to People Families may meet](#)', which can be printed off and spaces have been left to add the names of the professionals your school links with.

'When I first started working in the SEND world, I came across several services which I found confusing as to why they would be involved with families. I wondered why an Occupational Therapist could help a child, when all my previous experience had linked them only with the workplace. I completely missed the significance of the Ed bit in Ed Psych, and as for talk about the 'Umbrella Pathway', I couldn't even begin to guess what that was for.'

Parent Engagement Advisor - Worcestershire Children First.

In the [appendix](#) you will find printable items such as a 'SEND Glossary', a 'Guide to Health Referrals' and a 'Guide to People Families may meet'

Links to information on the SEND Local Offer

[What is SEND?](#)

[Professionals and services your child may meet on their SEND journey](#)

[Health services for children and young people with SEND](#)

[Money matters and benefits](#)

[Support groups for parents and carers](#)

[Useful websites and links](#)

Other links which parent carers may find useful:

[Jargon Buster | Healthwatch Worcestershire](#)

[Glossary Information - SENDIASS Worcestershire and Herefordshire](#)

[A-Z medical conditions \(Contact\)](#)



Key points in the school/parent carer relationship

First meeting

The first meeting needs to be a 'getting to know you' session, where you begin to build your relationship. The amount of support a family needs will ebb and flow over the time their child is in your school, but regular meetings within the assess, plan, do, review cycle are crucial to achieve positive outcomes. Getting it right at the first meeting will begin to establish a relationship where your parents are comfortable to ask for help when they need it, share with you things that are working and you can work together to make sure that any interventions are introduced quickly.

Things to think about:

1. The SENCo approaches the parent carer in person to set up the first meeting. SENCo's are often seen as the 'go to' person in school for the parent carers.
2. The parent carers will be using this meeting to get to know you as a person, moving forwards you will be asking them to share a lot of very important, sensitive information, so it's crucial to begin to develop trust.
3. The meeting should be non-judgemental, open and honest – putting the child at the heart.
4. Use the initial meeting to find out about their journey so far and their understanding of what the situation is. Within the meeting there should be discussions about confidentiality, what can be shared with colleagues (if needed) and what won't, unless there are safeguarding concerns.
5. Keep the meeting positive, about what their child can do, as many families will have experienced some negative dialogue about their child.
6. Think about the timing of the meeting, to make sure you can allocate enough time to it.
7. A slower approach may be needed if the parent carers don't recognise that their child needs additional support.
8. Be clear that paperwork from any previous settings is important and how parents can help with that. We have included a checklist in the [appendix](#), which can be downloaded, personalised and sent to the family before the meeting.
9. Consider that there may be cultural differences, it may be that you will be talking to the parents and their wider family (grandparents for example).
10. The first meeting should be on a one-to-one basis, with whoever is best placed to host it (e.g. SENCo, Class teacher), to ensure the parent carer/s aren't overwhelmed. Once that meeting has taken place, always be clear about who a parent carer can expect at any future meetings and that they are welcome to bring support along if they want to.
11. This meeting is a 'getting to know each other' session, you may wish to offer information and introduce other services, such as [SENDIASS](#), [Starting Well Partnership](#) and the [SEND Local Offer](#), but be careful not to overload with information at this point.

Transition Points

Transition between phases of education and preparation for adult life are also key points to engage with parent carers, and it's clear throughout the Code of Practice what schools must do to support this.

All meetings are an opportunity to share information and work together for positive outcomes. As the child becomes older the family will need information about future options and preparing for adulthood. Worcestershire have developed an All Age Disability service 0-25 which sits in Worcestershire County Council. It provides an integrated, coherent and coordinated response for children and young people 0-25 with Special Educational Needs and or Disability (SEND) to deliver positive outcomes including smooth transition to adulthood promoting independence and inclusion.

The number one priority is for children and adults to get the very best outcomes in life, this includes those who are facing the additional challenges of having a disability.

Worcestershire County Council and Worcestershire County Council wants to offer longer term life and independence planning for children and young people as they transition into adulthood.

The All Age Disability service aims to improve both the experiences of support and co-ordination, along with improved outcomes through a joined up 'offer' for children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs.

Preparing for adulthood (SEND Local Offer) | Worcestershire County Council



Effective meetings

Throughout the time their child is at your school you will have regular meetings with the family, to discuss progress, review strategies and plan for the following term. SENDIASS have produced some useful resources for parent carers which you may wish to share with them

Fact sheets Information - SENDIASS Worcestershire and Herefordshire (hwsendiass.co.uk)

Ahead of the meeting you may want to think about the type of questions you want to ask, to get the best out of the meetings and to make sure you use the time to find out what the parent carers are concerned about, if anything. Remember to demonstrate that you are actively listening to what they have to say, that you are interested in their viewpoint and reflect back their statements to ensure you have understood.

In addition to your regular review meetings, children with an EHCP will also have their Annual Reviews. These are a vital part of the EHCP process and it is important to ensure that your parent carers are given enough time to prepare for the meeting. It is essential that any paperwork and updated advice from other professionals are sent through to the family beforehand, in a format previously agreed, so they have time to read and understand them. An effective Annual Review meeting contains all the elements of Assess, Plan, Do and Review.

We have produced this checklist of the sort of things you may want to consider.

Assess, Plan, Do and Review checklist

Keep questions as open-ended as possible.

Work through the meeting in a logical, structured way, following the principles of the graduated approach: Assess/Plan/Do/Review.

Assess – ask how the family think things are going using questions like:

‘How do you think x is getting on?’, ‘How have things been over the last term?’, ‘What have been the real positives since we last met?’, ‘Is there anything in particular you’d like to talk about?’, ‘Is there anything that concerns you?’

Plan – check that you have understood what has been said, and then agree what needs actions or planning:

‘So we think these areas need more support/help....?’, ‘Is there any particular order that you think things need addressing?’, ‘How could things have been different?’, ‘Do you have any suggestions for what might help?’, ‘Can we talk about x’s goals for this term?’

Do – discuss what needs to be done and who will do what:

‘At school we will try and do....’, ‘What do you think you can do to help?’, ‘Is there anything we can do to help you?’, ‘What do you think...?’

Review – recap on what you’ve agreed, ensure a shared understanding and expectations and agree the date of the next meeting:

‘So these are the actions we’ve agreed...are you okay with them?’, ‘Are you sure, is there anything else we haven’t covered?’, ‘Is there anything else you wanted to ask/aren’t sure about?’, ‘What’s the best way to keep in touch?’, ‘When shall we meet next?’

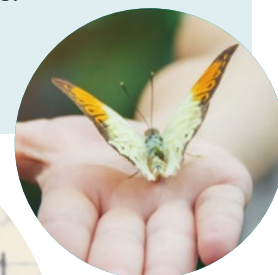
Approaches to help build relationships with parent carers

'Be clear. Be accessible and approachable. Be willing to admit if things don't go to plan. Listen to the feedback from parents and make amendments or changes in light of this.'

SENCo and SLE in Special Educational Needs

Assistant Associate Principal

St Bede's Catholic Middle School



We asked the schools who were helping us with this project to think about the methods they have used to communicate with their parent carers and consider how successful they had been. It's important to think about the message you want to convey and then decide on the most effective way to communicate it.



Two-way communication

Two-way, direct, face-to-face or person to person communication was obviously considered to be the most effective. This form ensures that meaning and understanding can be checked more easily and the process of building up a rapport is achieved more quickly. However, it's not always possible to communicate in this way, or indeed the most appropriate way to do so, depending on what the information is that you wish to share. Schools also said that it sometimes wasn't as effective when done virtually via Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

Two-way, written communication is another option, where both parties can use either email or an application like WhatsApp to 'talk' to each other. This has the advantage of being able to access the messages when it's convenient for the individual and gives more processing time for those who need it. It can be that those who have English as an Additional Language (EAL) or literacy issues may find it harder to communicate in this way, so it is less successful.

One-way communication

These methods tend to rely very heavily on the written word, and so literacy issues or EAL can be a barrier. It's a useful way to share information to the whole school population and can also be used to share class messages or send out reminders. However, with all one-way forms of communication, parents cannot ask questions or seek clarification.

What are the key elements to successful communication?

In person is the most powerful.

Have clear communication channels which are easy to use and understood by all parties.

Instant, real time access can be important to parent carers, they may not be available to take a phone call but can look at a message on an app or email.

Remember with one-way methods, there is no ability to ask questions or check understanding

Once we'd considered the two forms of communication, the group then explored different ways which schools had used them to help to build relationships with their parent carers.

Approaches to help build relationships with parent carers

We worked with the schools involved in this project to develop a list of different approaches they have successfully used to engage with their parent carers, share information and help to build those relationships. We have put them into this table format and you can then click the link if you would like to find out more.

Approach	What it is
SEND coffee mornings	These are SEND specific sessions and can be for the whole school or year group or class.
Coffee and cake open day sessions	School combine the child's visit to the school (around transition) with a coffee and chat session for the parent carers.
EAL Learning and Teaching mentors Includes a case study	For school with a high percentage of families with English as an Additional Language.
Electronic apps	Use in-school apps to share information with parent carers.
Emails	School have either dedicated year group emails, or individual emails for each teacher and the SENCo.
Family learning events	School organise family learning events or workshops which are aimed at parents of children with SEND.
Family support professional Includes a case study	School employs someone who can offer more support to families, than the teaching staff can offer.
Home postcard	School sends home positive news in the form of a postcard.
Inclusion network group	Parent carer run Inclusion network group - a group which is run by the parents for all the SEND families in the school.
Information leaflets (SEND specific)	School produce a series of information leaflet's about SEND related topics which can be shared with parent carers.
Newsletters	School produces regular newsletters for the whole school population, some schools include a specific SEND section.
Out of hours events	To help build relationships with working parent carers or those with other caring duties, it may be necessary to consider doing some activities in the evenings or at weekends.
Paper communication	Schools use paper forms of communication to share information with parent carers.

Approach	What it is
Parent ambassadors	School works with their parent carer forum/inclusion forum/inclusion network to develop the role of SEND parent ambassadors.
Parent carer forum	The school hosts a regular parent carer forum, where parent carer forum are invited in to share their views on SEND related topics.
Parent carer survey	An annual or regular survey is shared with parent carers to give them the opportunity to share their views on how things are with school.
Playground presence	The school SENCo, Head teacher, Deputy Head or Head of Year is on the school playground at the start and/or end of the day.
Pupil passport/profile	A profile of the pupil which contains information about the child, what their preferences are and what can help them learn.
Social events	School and/or the school fundraising group or parent carer forum arranges social events for their families or just for parents.
Social media	Schools have a Facebook, Twitter and/or an Instagram account and they encourage families to follow them.
Targeted drop-ins Includes a case study	The school offers drop-ins which are focused on SEND related topics, for example a regular SENCo drop in.
Telephone calls	The school or parent carer contact the other by telephone.
Text messages	Schools use text messaging to send out reminders to the whole school, year groups or classes or individual parent carers can be contacted via text.
Walk-in Wednesday Includes a case study	Monthly 'Walk-in Wednesday', parents are invited into the classroom with their child at the end of the day and there's an opportunity to celebrate and share what the children have been doing.
Website	All schools have a website and their SEND Policy must be on it.
Working document Includes a case study	An individual working document is set up for some of the SEND child in school, it takes the form of an Excel spreadsheet. Parent carers have real-time access.

SEND coffee mornings/evening

Description: School arranges a coffee morning for their families with a child with SEND, this can be face-to-face or virtual. Schools have found it helpful to either link it to something that the children are doing, for example sharing a class project afterwards, or having a theme to the coffee morning, other than SEND, for example, 'Let's talk about sleep'.

Things to consider: Some schools have found that virtual coffee mornings have attracted parents who wouldn't usually come into school. An evening session may be more attractive to working parents, particularly if they are virtual too. Schools have also reported that the timings of coffee mornings can influence attendance, for example if it follows a lengthy presentation or awards assembly parents may have to leave before it begins.

Consider ways that parents can easily link with each other, for example, doing multi-year groups can mean parents can chat to others with older children. It also might be worth parents wearing name labels, which include the first name of their child and class.

Consider ways that parents can easily link with each other, for example doing multi-year groups can mean parents can chat to others with older children. It also might be worth parents wearing name labels, which include the first name of their child and class. [Back to the table](#)

Coffee and cake open day sessions

Description: Schools combine the child's visit to the school (around transition) with a coffee and chat session for the parent carers. They offer a specific SEND session, for parent carers, to cover SEND related topics. The children are shown around the school while the parents meet in the school hall or another appropriate space, they can meet staff, perhaps the SENCo, chat to other parent carers (perhaps include a SEND Parent Champion if you have one) and eat cake. It's also an opportunity for parents to put faces to names in a non-threatening environment.

Things to consider: The timings of the sessions need to be inclusive; it may be that you have to run two sessions, one during the day and one in the evening. [Back to the table](#)

EAL Teaching and Learning mentors

Description: For school with a high percentage of families with English as an Additional Language (EAL), employing someone within the Learning Support team who can help with the language barrier can be invaluable. The TA can help to make drop ins, parent/teacher meetings and SEND information more accessible to EAL families.

Things to consider: There is obviously a cost implication to employing staff.

EAL Teaching and Learning Mentors Case Study

Background:

St Bede's Catholic Middle School is in Redditch and has pupils aged 9-13 from a variety of backgrounds. The school has a number of pupils from Polish families, and they wanted to be able to communicate effectively with both the pupils and their families who have English as their second language.

It was decided that they would look to recruit two Polish speaking Teaching and Learning (T&L) mentors.

Details:

Since 2008 the school have employed a Polish speaking T&L mentor, it has been so successful that in 2016 they recruited a second. Both mentors are full-time members of staff and support EAL pupils in a range of different ways across the whole school including delivering EAL language interventions. The mentors are also able to support in assessments such as Standardised Assessment Test (SATs) and work across the multi-academy supporting EAL students in GCSE examinations such as Polish.

The school have found their help invaluable, not only in the classroom, but also for speaking to family members and to translate school documents. Where language was previously a barrier with some parent carers, the EAL T&L mentors have been able to support in meetings and at other school events. On a daily basis the mentors are able to offer advice and support and remedy any difficulties relating to language barriers quickly and effectively.

The support that they have both given to families within the local community has been invaluable and has helped them to settle into their new community – providing help, guidance and support at all times.

Benefits:

St Bede's have found that having two Polish speaking T&L mentors has increased the opportunities to share effective interventions and strategies with families. This has enabled parents and carers to be able to communicate what works at home identifying other potential triggers. The mentors support school staff at many parent / carer information evenings.

They also assist parents and carers, the SEND department and pastoral team with referrals to external agencies such as CAMHS etc. They also support parents and carers when the school is making an application for an EHCP for a Polish pupil.

This has resulted in the pupils being better supported both in and out of school.

The school have found that overall, engagement from the Polish families has improved, they feel included, valued and part of the wider school community.

If a pupil is from a Polish family and has an EHCP, one of the EAL T&L mentors is involved with any meetings and the Annual Reviews. This has proved to be invaluable in ensuring communication is clear between home and school and that appropriate support is in place.

'I am so grateful to the EAL Teaching and Learning mentors at St. Bede's. They are always readily available and offer so much support to myself and my family. This has allowed me to support my child's education whilst ensuring a consistency of approach and effective communication. On occasion the mentors have visited me at home to help explain things more fully. I can't thank them enough!' *Parent of an EAL pupil.*

'The invaluable support that our EAL Teaching and Learning mentors provide us has been essential for supporting the pupils and families of Polish children both within school and in the local communities. Without their support we used to find that communication was a barrier and that we sometimes not tailoring our support effectively. We have learned so much from them too about similarities and differences of cultures – parent and carer engagement with our Polish families is extremely positive and the pupils are extremely happy to come to St. Bede's Catholic Middle School.' *Martyn West SENCo*

Things to consider:

There is obviously a cost associated with employing a member of staff plus any associated resources.

Look to recruit from the school community – this means the T&L mentors have an existing network they can build and expand upon.

Potential barriers: None

Top Tip: Must have an effective grasp of the English language and a sense of humour.

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Electronic apps

Description: Use in-school apps to share information with parent carers, particularly sharing photographs of what the children are doing in the day. If it's possible, encourage the children to be part of it as well, they can upload their own pictures and say what they've been doing.

Things to consider: Think about how often you will share information and keep it consistent throughout the year. There are a variety of apps out there, consider which best meets the needs of your school community. There are cost implications to the school for these apps and families with limited internet access and without suitable smartphones will be excluded.

Some examples are (but not an exclusive list or recommendations): Class DoJo, Marvellous Me, ScholarPack. [Back to the table](#)

Emails

Description: School have either dedicated year group emails, or individual emails for each teacher and the SENCo. Parents are told that they can use the email to contact the school and when they can expect a response (for example: the school policy is that they will reply within 24 hours in the working week). This is particularly useful for those parent carers who need time to process information or parent carers who work.

Things to consider: Multi-recipient emails may go into spam or junk, so ask parents to check there as well. Consider what information you are sharing, sometimes emails can be misinterpreted or misconstrued. Literacy or EAL can also be a barrier. Be clear within the email about how a parent carer can respond to information contained within it. School should have an email policy which covers what should and shouldn't be included or discussed within email correspondence. Emails only work for those families who have easy access to the internet and the use of an email account.

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Family learning events

Description: School organise family learning events or workshops which are aimed at parents of children with SEND. These workshops can be about a wide variety of topics, and open to all parent carers or targeted depending on need. Schools have found linking sessions to what is being taught in school has been useful.

Things to consider: Family learning events or workshops can be very effective if it involves the children as well. Ask your parent carers what topics they would like to see covered, or what they would find beneficial. Schools have found that family learning packages related to online training (anything that isn't person led), or workshops without the children were not as successful. [Back to the table](#)



Family support professional

Description: School employs someone who can offer more support to families, than the teaching staff can offer. The family support professional is there to offer support, information, and advice to vulnerable families, and are a non-teaching link into school.

Things to consider: There are cost implications to employing a member of staff and school needs to consider what support mechanisms they can put in place for the worker.

Family Support Professional Case Study

Background:

In 2019 Bengeworth CE Academy wanted to address the issue that some of their families needed more support than the teaching staff could offer. They also recognised that some families find it difficult to approach school staff, perhaps because of their own experiences when they went to school or because of previous experiences with schools as parents.

They wanted their families to feel supported and valued.

It was agreed that the school needed a dedicated member of staff who was employed to support vulnerable families and children.

Details:

Since September 2019 the school has employed a Family Support Professional (FSP), who is available for parents and parent carers throughout the school year and has proved to be highly effective.

The FSP is there to establish effective relationships with all the parents and carers and is advertised as a point of contact for them. She is there to discuss any issues, confidentially, and share information and advice on a variety of things, including behaviour management and parenting skills. She offers support to the parents and carers and to the children. The FSP is often a link between the families and other professionals both in and outside the school.

'Thank you so much for all of your support. It has made a big move and a lot of change easier to cope with. I hold your words of wisdom at the gate each morning with big smiles and positive attitudes - It certainly helps.' *Parent*

Things to consider:

There is an obvious cost implication to employing a member of staff, plus the resources needed to create and support the position.

Managing the FSP's caseload must be a priority within the school.

Bengeworth has found that making links with other FSP has led to the development of a network which offers support and the opportunity to share expertise.

Planning involved:

Bengeworth school created a number of resources to support the FSP work, including referral protocols, planning templates and records of involvement. They also developed the way the role is advertised to parents and created an Early Help Offer as a school.

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Home postcards

Description: School sends home positive news in the form of a postcard. These can be written and decorated by the child, giving details of something good which has happened during the day, or they could be a photo of the child with a piece of work and a narrative on the back written by a member of staff. Alternatively, it could be a virtual card, sent electronically to the parent carer.

Things to consider: Where possible involve the child with development of the postcard, that way they are more likely to remember to share it with their parents. You may want to encourage families to produce their own postcards and to send them into school.

As with any form of paper communication, they can be lost or not looked at. [Back to the table](#)

Inclusion network groups

Description: Parent carer run inclusion network group, a group which is run by the parents for all the SEND families in the school. The group discuss what happens in school, how they feel about things, and they advocate for things in terms of school practise. Some sessions can be topic led with invited speakers, for example the Educational Psychologist, or other outside agencies come to talk about their service. Any issues or suggestions are fed back to a nominated member of staff, probably the SENCo or Head teacher. Parent carers can be members and receive information without having to be active members of the group.

Things to consider: The school help to set up the group initially, but it should be parent carer led. It's an opportunity for parent carers to meet one another and learn from each other. They may also want to have their own Facebook page or group as well. [Back to the table](#)

Information leaflets

Description: School produce a series of information leaflets about SEND related topics which can be shared with parent carers. These leaflets can cover a variety of topics and be downloadable from the school website or via links sent to parent carers, as well as in a paper format.

Things to consider: Ask your parent carers what information leaflets they would be interested in and co-produce the content and layout to ensure they meet the needs of your audience. Parent carers often prefer something they can take away and look at later, particularly those with processing difficulties. Content can go out of date, so regular review dates of your literature needs to be considered. As with other forms of written information, literacy and language barriers can be an issue.

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Newsletters

Description: School produces regular newsletters for the whole school population, with information, term dates, upcoming events and class news. Some schools include a specific SEND section. The newsletter can be in a digital or paper format and can usually be found on the school website.

Things to consider: Think about the frequency of your newsletters and whether they are customised to suit school years, individual classes, or the whole school population. There is a cost implication to producing paper copies, but digital only editions can exclude the families with little or no internet access. When using written paper communication, they can often be lost or not looked at. Parents may have literacy issues or there can be language barriers. [Back to the table](#)

Out of hours events

Description: To help build relationships with working parent carers or those with other caring duties, it may be necessary to consider doing some activities in the evenings or at weekends. It might be that you offer drop-in sessions in the evening or allocate certain days where staff can be called later in the day. Virtual sessions can be scheduled for when children are in bed, and this may attract other parents who find it difficult to get out during the day.

Things to consider: Consider the timing of any event you are planning and ask if a session in the evening would be of interest to your parent carers. [Back to the table](#)

Paper communication

Description: Schools use paper forms of communication to share information with parent carers. This is in addition to any school newsletters or leaflets and can be about the individual pupil (for example a pupil diary) or about school trips or visitors (pupil post, letters).

Things to consider: You may want to discuss what format parents would prefer when their child starts at your school, and then make sure this is reviewed each year. Remember that written paper communication can be lost or not looked at and without a 'return slip' system there is no way of knowing if the parent has seen it. Parents may have literacy issues or there can be language barriers.

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SEND Parent ambassadors/buddies

Description: School works with parent carer forum/inclusion forum/inclusion network to develop the role of SEND parent ambassadors. Parent carers volunteer to be SEND ambassadors and they are available on the playground before and after school for peer support. These parents have a wealth of experience and knowledge to share with others and can help as a link with the school. The role and their names (and possibly a photograph) can be publicised through school newsletters and they can wear lanyards when they are in and around school and 'on-duty'.

Things to consider: Schools have found SEND ambassadors can often be a useful intermediate step for parents, particularly those who are new to the SEND world, they find it easier to first talk to another parent rather than go to a member of staff. [Back to the table](#)

Parent carer forums

Description: The school hosts a regular parent carer forum (PCF), where parent carers are invited in to share their views on SEND related topics. School may wish to get views about any proposed changes to SEND policy. The forum can find out more about [parent carer participation from Contact](#), the national body who support forums.

Things to consider: When setting up the forum think about when and where it happens, ask parents when the best time of day would be and how you can involve those who cannot make it. Parent carer forums can be a useful way for parent carers to link with each other and offer each other support.

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Parent surveys or questionnaires

Description: An annual or regular survey is shared with parent carers to give them the opportunity to share their views on how things are with school, what is going well and not so well. Progress can be tracked over time and any potential issues highlighted.

Things to consider: You may want to co-produce the survey with your parent carer forum, to make sure you are asking the questions parents want to answer. The survey can be hosted digitally, with paper copies for those who struggle with IT or who have limited access. Consider whether you want to make the survey anonymous, which can mean you wouldn't collect data on the age or disability of a child as they could potentially be identified.

Parents may have literacy issues or there can be language barriers, so you may want to enlist the help of your SEND parent buddies, EAL TA or parent carer forum members to support them. [Back to the table](#)

Playground presence

Description: The school SENCo, Head teacher, Deputy Head or Head of Year is on the school playground at the start and/or end of the day (with a smile) for parents to approach and talked to. If the parent has concerns, they are encouraged to make an appointment with the relevant member of staff so it can be discussed in private.

Things to consider: Some schools only do this at the end of the day, so it doesn't disrupt the school day. This approach will only be applicable to primary schools. Staff only approach parents to share positive news/feedback. You may wish to allocate certain days when the SENCo is available. [Back to the table](#)

Pupil passport/profile

Description: The pupil passport is a useful person-centred working tool. It can be a one page, profile of the pupil which outlines pupils' key strengths, needs, strategies and key adjustment to teaching that are needed day to day. The resource should be easily accessible to school staff and offers a purposeful way of sharing important information about the pupil. It is a working document which can be updated and adapted when needed.

Things to consider: The passport should be reviewed regularly with the parent/carers, pupil, and the SENCo. You may want to encourage the pupil to take ownership of it and encourage conversations about learning between the teacher and the pupil, involving them positively in understanding strategies and approaches to enable continued positive engagement. It can be shared with parents and updated as part of the graduated response Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycle. [Back to the table](#)

Social events

Description: School and/or the school fundraising group or parent carer forum arranges social events for their families or just for parents. These can be whole school events or aimed at year groups and are largely used for fund raising. They offer a non-threatening environment to encourage families into school and can appeal to those parents who are reluctant to engage. These events could include school fayres, quiz nights, bingo sessions, race nights or World Cup/European Cup football nights.

Things to consider: Ask families what sort of thing they would be interested in attending. Some of the themes lend themselves to including food and you could encourage families to bring and share food, particularly if you have a wide range of cultural backgrounds at school. Other events, such as sport themed nights, may attract fathers to come along.

Make sure staff are on hand and approachable, and there is provision if someone wants to discuss something in private, though the aim of the event is to get people through the door.

Think about the time of the event, some could run straight after school, some in the evening and others at the weekend. Some events are more inclusive than others, for example, quiz nights could be off putting to some families, particularly those with EAL or literacy issues, so think carefully about how you do it, you could make them all picture rounds or music/film related with clips. [Back to the table](#)

Social media

Description: Many schools have a Facebook, Twitter and/or an Instagram account and they encourage families to follow them. Information and events can be posted online, and parents can access it at a time which suits them. To engage with your parent carers, you may want to set up a specific SEND Facebook page for your school, which could be a closed account for your SEND families.

Things to consider: Content and comments will need to be monitored, and the school should have a social media policy. This method obviously relies on families having the required social media accounts and access to the internet. [Back to the table](#)

Targeted drop-ins

Description: The school offers drop-in's which are focussed on SEND related topics, for example a regular SENCo drop in. Some drop ins may be focussed around a particular service or topic, for example Speech and Language or sleep. The drop in should offer an opportunity for parent carers to come in and discuss their concerns, ask for advice or collect resources to use at home.

Things to consider: Some drop ins might be regular, either weekly or monthly and others could be one offs. Ask parent carers for suggestions for topics. You could contact SENDIASS to see if they could offer a session. You may want to ask parent carers to book slots or keep it open to whoever comes along.

Targeted Drop-ins/Virtual Workshops Case Study

Background:

Westlands First School is a school and nursery located on a residential estate in Droitwich. They pride themselves on the friendly, happy atmosphere they have created in partnership with their families.

The school SENCo found they were often asked similar questions by parent carers about ways they could support their child at home and what strategies they could employ which would help. Because of this and other feedback, the SENCo decided to deliver topic specific workshop's which would be targeted at different families, depending on the needs of their child.

Virtual Workshops

During the autumn term 2021 the school hosted the first of these Virtual Workshops which covered Speech and Language interventions. The SENCo worked with class teachers to identify the families who would benefit the most from the session. The parents were sent personalised invitations explaining what the session was about and how it could help them along with a link to the virtual meeting.

The SENCo used resources from the NHS SaLT website to create a short PowerPoint presentation and shared these links during and then after the meeting, via email. The presentation was delivered by the SENCo and a SaLT Therapist as part of the additional SaLT traded hours the school had purchased.

During the session parent carers could see the resources being explained and demonstrated and were able to ask questions.

The success of the workshop means more are planned targeting other areas of need, with the next one focusing on cognition and learning.

Benefits:

Families can be selected for invitations to specific workshops which will benefit them, which means they attend with other families who are experiencing similar challenges. During the session they can share their stories and ask questions to either the SENCo or the therapist. Unfortunately, as it was a virtual session it was more difficult for the parent carers to make links with each other.

As the session allowed parents to see interventions modelled it was much more powerful and inclusive than just sharing a link. The same, consistent message is shared with a number of families at the same time.

'Thank you for that it was really useful. I now know simple games to do and useful websites to use.' *Parent*

'It was really well attended, and it was so nice being able to share the big picture with parents. Some parents get so focussed on the speech sounds that they are unaware of the stages before.' *Speech and Language Therapist*

'It was so nice being able to share strategies with keen parents. They were able to ask questions throughout the session and most seized the opportunity to be signposted to further websites for ideas on how they could support their child's speech and language development. The virtual session enabled working parents or those with very young children to join. The session was more focussed and had a clear start and end time.' *SENCo*

There are virtually no direct costs to the sessions, other than preparation time and the use of the previously purchased traded hours for the therapist, and the resources used were free from the NHS.

Things to consider:

Think about the timing of the sessions – when would be best for your parents, during the school day, directly after school or an evening session.

An online session means potentially more people can access it, but it may be that parents would prefer face to face.

Plan well in advance and contact any relevant professionals to see if they are available to attend for at least some of the time. It should be noted that the SaLT therapist was involved as school had purchased additional hours – their involvement would NOT be available as part of the normal NHS service.

Give parents plenty of notice about the session, be clear about what it will cover and how it will benefit them and their child.

Send reminders closer to the time and on the day of the session. No actual cost involved – using existing resources and existing traded hours.

Potential barriers:

If the session is to be online internet access can be a barrier for some families. It was also more difficult for parents to link with each other.

Top Tip:

Face-to-face would be best, with plenty of notice to parents.

Telephone calls

Description: The school or parent carer contact the other by telephone. School proactively give the relevant contact numbers to families and indicate the best times to use them. Parent carers make sure their contact details are up to date and what times are best to reach them (unless it's an emergency).

Things to consider: Consideration should be given to timings of calls, particularly if parents work. School may have to make special provision if a parent carer has English as a second language or has processing difficulties and therefore a call 'out of the blue' is not ideal. [Back to the table](#)

Text messages

Description: Many schools use text messaging to send out reminders to the whole school, year groups or classes. Individual texts can be useful to parents particularly if they can text back, as they can choose to respond when it suits them or send a message to a teacher in the evening. School should include a text message policy within its policies and procedures and be clear about timescales for responses.

Things to consider: Parents need to have a mobile phone and credit to text and can change their mobile phone numbers. Messages can be misunderstood and there is no mechanism to check understanding or that the message has been read. [Back to the table](#)

Walk-in Wednesday's

Description: Monthly 'Walk-in Wednesday', parents are invited into the classroom with their child at the end of the day and there's an opportunity to celebrate and share what the children have been doing. The children talk about the work they've done and there are opportunities to discuss the learning that's taken place.

Things to consider: The Walk-in Wednesdays are in each classroom, so all teachers are involved, and all families are invited. You may want to consider making some of the sessions just for your SEND families so the groups are smaller, and the discussions can be more targeted.

Walk-in Wednesday Case Study

Background:

In 2016 Bengeworth CE Academy was keen to increase parental engagement with school staff and give them opportunities to feel more involved with their child's learning. The school wanted to give parents the opportunity to come into school on a regular but informal basis. It was first introduced by the Head teacher who further explored the idea with staff and through parent forums.

What is Walk in Wednesday (WiW)?

WiW involves the whole school and every classroom. Parents are invited into school on the first Wednesday of each month to share their child's learning, for example sharing a class project afterwards, or sharing a piece of work the child is particularly proud of.

The sessions take place in the child's classroom, immediately after the school day.

Children leave the work out that they want to showcase and are there to show their parents and explain what they have been doing.

All the teachers and support professionals are on hand to talk to the parents and to get to know them. Parents are encouraged to ask questions, but if there is a particular topic or issue to be discussed, parents are asked to make a separate, private appointment.

Since its inception, the sessions have proved very popular and are well attended.

'It has been a great way to promote and strengthen collaborative partnerships, in a friendly, informal way. It's a chance for parents to see their child's learning and to be part of their learning journey. Parents enjoy celebrating their child's achievements. It has strengthened home school relationships as well as securing better outcomes for home learning as a result.' *SENCo*

There are no costs involved or any substantial planning needed, as the sessions are part of the end of day routine.

Things to consider:

The after-school session can be difficult for working parents to attend, although giving plenty of notice and making them a regular occurrence at the same time of the month can enable some working parents to plan to attend some of the sessions. In addition, the school enables the children to share their work virtually and upload it to SeeSaw and social media to help to alleviate/combat this.

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Website

Description: All schools have a website and their SEND Policy should be on it. Some schools have developed a SEND area for parents where information is shared, and resources can be downloaded. Parents will not continue to use a website if it contains incorrect or old information so pages should be reviewed often, and new content added.

Things to consider: Ask parent carers what they want and co-produce the SEND section with them. Information can go out of date; therefore, you need to ensure that someone is assigned to regularly review and update it. Websites are ideal for parent carers who work, have other children at home, or for those who may have processing problems as they can access information when it's convenient for them. Parent carers with literacy issues or EAL could be reluctant to access a website, along with those who struggle with IT or have no or very limited access to a computer or the internet.

It can be difficult to know where to look on websites, so bookmarking or sharing links to pages for parents can really help. [Back to the table](#)

Working document

Description: An individual working document is set up for some of the SEND child in school, it takes the form of an Excel spreadsheet. The document is updated throughout the day, recording what work the child is doing, how they are getting on and what their anxiety levels are. Parents are asked what sort of information they want to see on the document, for example if they have eaten their lunch, if that is something parents are concerned about. The parents are then sent a link to the document, so they can access it at any point in the day. It helps parents to see how their child is getting on, if maybe they are worried because the journey to school didn't go well, they can check online without calling the school or waiting until the end of the day to find out.

Things to consider: It's quite labour intensive, so schools might only consider it for some of their children. It depends on parents being able to access it through their phones or computer, so it's not suitable for all families. It's useful for those parents who prefer a written form of communication, or perhaps for those who work. It shouldn't replace a phone call if something needs to be communicated urgently.

Working Document Case Study

Background:

Walkwood Middle School wanted to develop a method of communication especially for the parents of the children who attend their Mainstream Autism Base (MAB). As with many SEND children, the pupils in the MAB can sometimes be upset at the start of the day, or at other times, for example during certain lessons, and the school realised that it's important for parents to be able to 'check in'.

They recognised a need for parents to be able to access real time information about their children and how their day was going. Parents phoning the school for updates proved to be problematic for both parties, as it would depend on when both the parents and the teaching staff were able to access a phone.

What is the working document (WD)?

The school talked to parents to come up with a solution, and the working document was born. It is what it says, a working document that can be tailored to the needs of the children.

The document was created in Excel and discussed with parents as what would be useful to include, so it is individualised to each pupil. Pupils' timetables are inputted, and the following information is recorded: lessons, engagement, management, progress made, well-being and additional comments.

Day:	Date:	Session:					Additional Information:
Thursday	14.07.22						
		Tutor					
		1. Maths			Ep		X was working really well and completed some division questions on his own. X was dividing by 10, 4 and 5
		Break					
		2. Maths			Ep		As above
		3. MAB					
		Lunch					
		Tutor					
		4. MAB Craft session			Mp		
		5. English			mp		

Parents are included in any updates or changes that are required as the working document is regularly evaluated as whether it remains to be an effective tool for communication.

The most recent adaptations include colour codes for all aspects, except 'Additional comments'. This gives a quick, at a glance, guide to a pupil's day. The coding has been shared with parents and staff to ensure a common understanding and expectations.

Parents are sent an individualised link which allows them access to the document throughout the day. If the 'Additional comments' states any difficulties or concerns which may arise throughout the day, this is then followed with additional communication, usually via a phone call.

Benefits:

Parents have found it reassuring that they can check how their child's day is going, at a time which suits them, without feeling they are constantly 'bothering' the school. They feel included and informed.

The working document has also proved valuable for tracking what subjects, areas, times of the day are particularly good or difficult. It's also a useful tool for highlighting any concerns for individual pupils and then establishing appropriate strategies and interventions.

Things to consider:

Whilst there are no actual cost investment associated with setting up the system, the time needed to set it up and successfully run it, needs to be factored in.

It's important to include teaching staff and teaching assistants in the process and maintain communication as to how appropriate and efficient the working document is.

At Walkwood all the MAB staff are involved along with mainstream Teaching Assistants and the SENCo.

Remember the staff who are inputting the information should have the time to do this effectively throughout the day.

There is also an element of time needed 'upfront' to introduce and explain the system to parents and this should be repeated with each new cohort. However, this does ultimately save time overall and it helps build successful parental relationships. It's important to continually review the system to ensure parents can access and understand the information.

Teaching assistant 1: 'The working document allows for consistent communication, regular monitoring, and accessible identification in patterns of behaviour and anxiety, allowing for effective adaptations to the pupils timetables reflective of needs.'

Teaching assistant 2: 'The working document allows all involved to understand the pupils, keep in touch between lessons as support may change, and allows parents to review and process if further discussions are warranted. Parents appreciate being able to see throughout the day and not have to wait until a phone call or email home at the end of each day.'

Potential barriers

Some parent carers are unable to access the system on their mobile phones, or they have no access to IT and therefore alternatives need to be considered. In some cases, this has meant that parents have the day snippet from the document and sent over by email, or, if they have no access to IT the pupil would have a paper home communication book.

Top Tip:

The success of the system is very dependent on the school staff having the time to input. The requirements and number of parents it would involve should be reviewed as to whether this would be an appropriate form of contact.

Supporting parent carers to participate

Things to consider

A key aim of this toolkit is to ensure that engagement is inclusive and open to all. Developing the engagement of parent carers presents several issues that need consideration and certain barriers to be overcome.

Accessibility

Parents and carers should be able to participate regardless of their personal circumstances. Transport can often be a problem, particularly in rural areas, but by working on solutions with your parent carers, they can still take part.

Consider the timings of meetings and it won't be one size fits all, some parent carers will find meetings during the school day easier, whilst others may prefer after school or even evenings. Think about the need for childcare or other caring responsibilities parent carers may have as this can make a huge difference to successful engagement.

Inclusion

There are some groups within our community who feel more socially excluded than others, and they are less likely to engage and therefore traditionally the least likely to be heard. Work with your school community to target effort and the resources which are needed to ensure these groups can take part and have a voice. Work together to think about ways to engage with priority groups, for example those with disabilities, learning difficulties, black and minority ethnic groups, traveller communities, substance mis-users, teenage parents, working parents, fathers and those living in disadvantaged areas.

Jargon!

The SEND world has its own language and it's easy to get caught up in it and use acronyms or 'jargon'. Using plain, parent friendly language is essential, with the main advantages being that information is easier for your audience to read, and in a face-to-face situation you get your message across more easily and in a friendlier way.

We have provided a glossary in the [appendix](#), which can be printed off and given to parent carers.

Almost anything – from leaflets and letters to legal documents – can be written in plain English without being patronising or over-simple.

The Plain English Campaign has excellent guidance to support professionals with communicating and producing information in 'Plain English'. [Plain English website](#)



Awareness of individuals barriers

Parent carers face many barriers and obstacles and they may find it difficult to engage with school for a variety of reasons. Being aware of what these barriers can be can help you to mitigate the obstacles and encourage engagement.

We have listed some, but not all, the barriers parent carers have made us aware of:

- Bad experiences in the past with other schools, either with this child, other family members or their own school experience
- A fear of teachers, schools, authority
- Lack of confidence leading to a fear of being judged
- Fear of not being included or made to feel welcome
- Low self-esteem, anxiety about formal meetings
- Fear about not understanding what is being said
- Too much jargon is used
- Lots of people in the meeting who I don't know and who seem to know each other
- Not sure who else will be at the meeting
- Will it make any difference, is it worth it?
- Concerned about being held responsible for my child's lack of progress or perceived disruptive behaviour
- Concern that I might be asked to do something I don't know how to do
- Lack of confidence in speaking and/or writing and/or reading English
- No transport or transport is too expensive
- Family commitments or other caring commitments
- Work
- Afraid to go out after dark
- Invitation lost or not enough notice given for the meeting
- Cultural differences
- Some people don't like speaking in public
- I need time to think things through, and I'm concerned I will be put on the spot

Worcestershire Seven Quality Standards for parent carer engagement

The following Quality Standards for parent carer engagement have been developed for the benefit of schools in Worcestershire. They are based on similar principles to the Quality Standards that appeared in the Parental Engagement guide, published by Worcestershire County Council in 2008.

The standards represent guidance only and are not linked to an accredited award. Appropriately implementing the standards however can help contribute to existing inspection frameworks.

The standards identify a range of suggestions and best practice for embedding effective and genuine parent carer engagement.

We have presented them in the form of a checklist, for schools to use when they are assessing where they are and planning where they want to be.

We suggest that you use the columns to record what you currently do, what you plan to do and what needs more work. In order to get a full reflection of your current position, we recommend that you share the framework with your parent carers and ask them to fill it in from their viewpoint. This framework can then be used to co-produce an action plan together to further develop your parent carer engagement.



Standard One: Shared values

Standard One: Shared Values – what everyone in the school believes in				
There is a clear commitment to working co-productively with parent carers, to develop, review and deliver shared aims together, with parent carers actively involved as equal partners in the process.				
		Emerging	Developing	Embedded
1	Your school has an ethos where everyone within it shares and values the principles of co-production and involving parent carers and this is highlighted in your mission statement, vision or development plan aims and objectives.			
2	You ensure that key information about SEND in your school is co-produced and is available to all parent carers (e.g. policies are adapted so that they can be understood by all who read them).			
3	Your school specifically informs parent carers of the variety of co-production engagement and consultation options available to them (questionnaire, focus group, fun activities with children, parent carer forum) and is committed to involving those who are traditionally excluded from this type of activity (e.g. you work with partners when planning to reach fathers, ethnic minority groups, teenage mothers and fathers).			
4	Your school is open and honest; explaining clearly to parent carers the school's governance to adhere to SEND legislation.			
5	Parent carers are always involved, as equal partners, in any review of your school as a matter of routine (e.g. you have a parent carer forum to obtain their views on SEND within school on a regular basis).			
6	You have worked together with parent carers to co-produce a charter for parent carer engagement that outlines parent carers' expectations and your commitment to support their active involvement, based on the Ladder of Participation.			

Standard Two: Strategies

Standard Two: Strategies – The school’s intentions and plans – what you are committing to				
As a matter of routine parent carers are actively encouraged to be involved in co-producing and reviewing SEND policies and practices in school.				
		Emerging	Developing	Embedded
1	Your school has co-produced a strategy or action plan outlining its aims and objectives for Parent carer engagement (within its overall parent engagement strategy) ensuring that it is an ongoing and sustainable process.			
2	Parent carers have been involved in the co-production of this strategy or action plan for engagement ensuring that it is meaningful, relevant, jargon free and accessible to all.			
3	Your school’s strategy or action plan for engagement acknowledges and recognises the potential barriers for parent carers to participate and be involved and reflects how you plan to overcome them.			
4	<p>Within the co-production process parent carers’ views on what works well for them are actively sought and reflected in the development and review of a range of strategies, policies and action plans within your school, both SEND specific and for the wider school.</p> <p>For example – all information to parent carers on the annual review process, mentoring and peer support for new arrivals to the community, meeting arrangements, home school agreement are co-produced involving parent carers.</p>			
5	Parent carers are involved as equal partners in co-producing, reviewing and evaluating the above processes.			

Standard Three: Structures

Standard Three: Structures – the mechanisms that support and enable parent carers to take part

There are a range of mechanisms which are in place to support the engagement of parent carers as joint and equal partners in decisions that affect their child.

	Emerging	Developing	Embedded
<p>1</p> <p>Your school has developed a range of mechanisms to support the engagement of parent carers as partners co-produce decisions that affect their child for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A parent carer forum or parent carer council (in addition to a parent carer rep on the wider school parent forum) ■ A parent carer support group ■ Parent Ambassadors (SEND) to support parent carers ■ School policies are co-produced and consulted on during established activities or meetings (e.g. stay and play sessions, family learning sessions, SEN reviews, family support meetings/reviews, health or social care reviews, school assemblies, fun days) ■ Evaluation and feedback forms ■ Parent carer friendly review meetings ■ Feedback methods are in place to show what has changed and that parent carers have been listened to. 			
<p>2</p> <p>Your school has asked for parent carers' views on barriers to participation at the earliest stages. Staff work with parent carers on how to overcome these and ensure that action arises out of such planning. School commits to checking for any barriers with each new cohort of parent carers.</p>			

Standard Four: Systems

Standard Four: Systems – the ‘working parts’ – the technical, human and financial resources

Appropriate procedures and routines are in place to support co-production and the recognition of the value of parent carers with regular communication about the impact of their involvement.

		Emerging	Developing	Embedded
1	Your school has clearly identified budgets and resources for the engagement of parent carers, For example (if appropriate) – key staff, publicity and promotional expenditure, venue costs and their involvement in co-production activity.			
2	Parent carers are involved in expenditure decisions relating to identified budgets (e.g. Parent carer forum activity costs).			
3	Your school has developed systems for highlighting opportunities for co-production, and the impact and value that this has had on school and its SEND families. (e.g. case studies and articles in newsletters, website, local media, school promotional material, school prospectus. Regular updates about the impact working co-productively has made in school and for families which are shared with the school community including the Governors). You have a mix of school generated material and accounts written by parent carers.			
4	Your school has developed policies or procedures for recognising the importance of input from parent carers, for example – publicly acknowledging their help, thanking individuals for their input and experience, celebrating achievements together, highlighting the achievements of your parent carer forum.			

Standard Five: Staff**Standard Five: Staff – skilled, emphatic and trusted staff**

All in the school are aware of and value the importance of involving and engaging with parent carers.

		Emerging	Developing	Embedded
1	Your school refers to its commitment to co-production and parental involvement, and specifically parent carer involvement, in its recruitment and selection process (e.g. relevant job descriptions, person specifications, interview format).			
2	Your school has a focus on co-production and the value of parental engagement, and specifically parent carer engagement in its staff induction and training, which includes input from parent carers (e.g. parents' charter, meeting with parent carer forum).			
3	Staff are encouraged to take an active role in promoting co-production within the school community. (e.g. Parent carer engagement is a regular agenda item in staff and Governor meetings, staff share examples of co-production and it's benefits, successes are shared, case studies are co-produced and celebrated).			
4	Your school has identified an influential member of staff to champion parent carer engagement and co-production. School provides resources, information and guidance to ensure that this crucial role is supported.			

Standard Six: Skills and knowledge

Standard Six: Skills and knowledge – parent carers are equal partners recognised as experts by experience and supported to develop their knowledge of SEND if needed

Parent carers are the experts of their children and, if desired, are provided with appropriate information, support and mentoring to develop their knowledge of SEND to enable them to participate fully in their child's support and review meetings.

		Emerging	Developing	Embedded
1	Your school reviews the skills and knowledge needs of parent carers ensuring that assess and review meetings are accessible to all. (e.g. you are aware of how to have key information appropriately translated, language and literacy skills are considered, and support is offered where appropriate. You have arranged for peer mentoring for those parents who are new to the SEND system. You provide links to guidance (for example on the SENDIASS website)).			
2	Your school has provided information to parent carers that clearly explains the purpose, aims and importance of parent carer active involvement in review activities (e.g. links to SENDIASS and Local Offer websites, parent carer handbook, parent carer forum terms of reference, peer mentor/volunteer training). You are explicit about the value of their input and the importance of co-producing plans and policies			
3	Your school has provided information to parent carers about the roles of different professionals, what might be written in reports and why they are written in that way (e.g. links to relevant pages on Local Offer, guidance about reports).			
4	Your school commits to making meetings a positive experience with parent carers as equal participants. Meetings are outcome focussed.			

Standard Seven: Leadership

Standard Seven: Leadership – genuine, open and honest senior leaders who champion parent and specifically parent carer engagement.

The senior leadership team (SLT) champion the engagement of parents and specifically parent carers, meeting with them to review and develop arrangements for the co-production of specific projects or pieces of work.

		Emerging	Developing	Embedded
1	Senior leaders regularly champion parent engagement and specifically parent carers involvement, highlighting the importance and value of this activity with parents, staff, governors and partners.			
2	The senior leadership team actively seek to involve parent carers as equal partners in decision-making processes (e.g. In reviewing and co-producing policies, in co-producing plans for future development of the school and the delivery of SEND specific services.).			
3	Senior leaders commit resources to support parent carer engagement as an ongoing and sustainable process as opposed to a one-off event (e.g. budgets allow for promotion of activity, support groups, venue costs and refreshments. Staff are supported to develop relationships and work collaboratively with parent carers.)			
4	The senior leadership team ensure that there is timely feedback to parents outlining the impact of their engagement (e.g. “you said... we did...”, “we are able to make these changes you asked for, but unable to make these because...”).			
5	Senior leaders highlight to leadership teams and partners the impact and value of parental engagement and co-production on the school (e.g. annual reports, governor reports, inspection framework documents, school website).			
6	The senior leadership team take an active part in celebrating and thanking parents for their involvement and commitment to engagement and co-production activity.			

Policy, research and further reading

SEND Code of Practice

[SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Children and Families Act 2014

[Children and Families Act 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

Equality Act 2010

[Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

Families in Partnership

[Parent Carer Forum | Home | Worcestershire Association of Carers \(carersworcs.org.uk\)](#)

Parents' Voice

[Parents Voice | The Voice Of Every Parent Matters](#)

SEND Local Offer

[SEND Local Offer | Worcestershire County Council](#)

SEND Responsibility Framework

[SEND Responsibility Framework | Worcestershire County Council](#)

Children's Participation - Roger Hart

https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens_participation.pdf

[Review of Best Practice in Parental Engagement \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

[Parental engagement | EEF \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](#)

[Parentkind - Why parents matter](#)

[Engaging parents and families - A toolkit for practitioners | Learning resources | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](#)

Equality Act – Advice for Schools

[Equality Act 2010: advice for schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Equality Act Guide for schools - FINAL EM EDIT.pdf \(councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk\)](#)

Appendices

Here are a number of resources that you may wish to print off and share with your parent carers.

Guide to people families may meet - This is a guide to professionals your parent carers may meet through your school. There are spaces for you to fill in the names of the relevant professionals who work with your school.

First meeting checklist - Please give this to your parent carer before your first meeting for them to fill in and bring with them.

Guide to Health referrals

SEND Glossary

Appendix 1: A guide to some of the people you may meet

There may be professionals and services that you and your child meet through school, who can offer support, help and advice for your child's Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND).

You may already know about some or all of them, but just in case we've put together this short guide to some of the more common ones.

Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCo)

Insert name:

The SENCo is the teacher or person who is responsible for assessing, planning and monitoring the progress of children with special educational needs in school. They are here to help and support families and teachers.

School Family Support Worker

Insert name:

Our family support worker works with families to support in range of situations including establishing routines, challenging behaviour, ensuring school attendance and support during difficult periods in family life.

Contact details:

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

SENDIASS have a dedicated team of advisors offering legally-based and easily accessible information and advice about special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

They support parents, carers, children and young people with SEND and the service is free, impartial and confidential.

Contact details:

01905 768153

sendiass@worcestershire.gov.uk

www.hwsendiass.co.uk

Autism and Complex Communication Needs Team

Insert name:

The team are employed by Worcestershire County Council and are specialist teachers who work with children and young people who are on the Autism Spectrum or have complex communication needs. They offer support to us, the school, to help best support those children in school. They will do observations of pupils with an existing Autism Spectrum

Disorder diagnosis. They write reports for school which will be shared with parents outlining specific strategies to use to meet the child's needs. They can also provide specialist resources and training for staff.

Educational Psychologist

Insert name:

Educational Psychologists are specially trained to help children or young people who are experiencing difficulties with their access to learning. These difficulties may include behavioural, social or emotional needs. We will always talk to you first if we think your child would benefit from a referral. They will meet with school and parents to share resources and strategies to use in school and at home. They can also offer specialist training and support for staff.

Learning Support Team

Insert name:

We will do a referral to this team (with parental consent) if we want specific, individual advice about meeting the learning needs of a child with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They can also deliver intervention groups for target group of pupils, training for staff and share resources.

Hearing Impairment Team/ Multi-Sensory Impairment team/Visual Impairment Team

Insert names:

We work with these teams if a child has a hearing/sensory or visual impairment. They are professionals who will observe the child and then provide advice and support about how best to support their educational needs.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS)

Insert names:

This NHS team provides assessment and treatment for children and young people who are experiencing significant mental health difficulties.

Paediatric Occupational Therapists

Insert name:

Paediatric Occupational Therapists work with children and young people who may be experiencing difficulties or have a disability that impacts on their daily life. This could involve self-care, play and school skills such as writing and organisation. Following an initial assessment they will write a report for school and parents outlining their recommendations and strategies to help meet the child's needs.

Speech and Language Therapy (SALT)

Insert name:

The SALT team will complete an initial assessment of a child, following a referral from school (with parental consent). They will then write a report for school and parents which will provide specific targets and resources for the child to help with speech, language, communication or swallowing difficulties.

Umbrella Pathway - Autism assessment

The Umbrella Pathway is a diagnostic pathway that provides assessment and diagnosis of children and young people who present with neuro-developmental disorders due to Autism Spectrum Conditions.

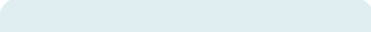
The purpose of the Umbrella Pathway is to assess whether a child or young person has Autism or not. Part of the assessment process through the multi-professional team is to signpost to other appropriate services for help and support both during the assessment and following the assessment.

To find out more about these and other services visit these pages on Worcestershire's SEND Local Offer:

[Professionals and services your child may meet on their SEND journey | SEND Local Offer](#)

[Health services for children and young people with SEND | SEND Local Offer](#)

Appendix 2: First meeting checklist

This first meeting is a getting to know each other session and an opportunity for us to find out about  and you and for you to find out about us.

You may find it useful to think about a few things before you come along, which is why we've sent you this checklist, but you don't have to use it.

1. What are their needs?

2. What do they like doing?

3. What are they good at?

4. What other services are involved with them?

Do they see/have seen:

Community Paediatrician

Physiotherapist

Speech and Language Therapist

CAMHS

Occupational Therapist

Any other?

(You may want to bring any letters or reports along to the meeting to share or talk about.)

5. Do they have a diagnosis?

6. Is there anything else you would like to know?

Appendix 3: Worcestershire Health service referrals

Please note: For the most up to date referral information and referral criteria it is best to refer to the service's own webpage.

Service	Who can refer	Comment
ADHD pathway	Referral to Community Paediatrics by any health or education professional including school.	Assessment for possible neuro-developmental conditions due to significant concern with attention, concentration and /or hyperactivity.
Autism Spectrum Disorder assessment pathway – Umbrella Umbrella Service (hacw.nhs.uk)	Referrals: from School, school nurse or GP, Complex Communication Needs (CCN) team, Educational Psychology (EP), Speech and Language Therapy (SALT), or Occupational Therapy Team (OT).	The referral form requires very detailed information and will require parents to complete a home form in partnership with the child/ young person's school/educational setting, or professionals working closely with the child over time on a regular basis.
Community Paediatrics – (0-18 years) Community Paediatric Team (hacw.nhs.uk)	Referral: by any professional including school.	Specialist doctors who do clinical assessments for children and young people with long-term disability, developmental delay, and neurodevelopmental conditions.
CAMHS CAST (Consultation, Advice, Supervision and Training) CAMHS CAST (hacw.nhs.uk)	Any professional can refer using referral form once they have parental consent, but it is best if the school refers. Every school has a named CAST worker who they can contact.	CAST offers mental health specific consultation, advice, supervision and training to school staff and other professionals where a young person is not currently receiving Specialist CAMHS support.
CAMHS – Reach for Wellbeing CAMHS Reach4wellbeing (hacw.nhs.uk)	Referral: Accepts both self-referrals, parent referrals and professional referrals. NOTE: Because of the nature of the service Reach for Wellbeing does not accept referrals for children with ASD	Online group programmes using cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) principles. A six-week anxiety and low mood programme for young people who are in years 7 to 13. A six-week anxiety programme for parents/carers to support the emotional wellbeing needs of their children who are in reception to year 6.

Service	Who can refer	Comment
CAMHS - Wellbeing and Emotional Support Teams in Schools CAMHS West (hacw.nhs.uk)	Referral: Only schools who have an education mental health practitioner attached to their school can refer directly.	Children and young people 5-18 years Short term support delivered by education mental health practitioners (EMHPs) and senior practitioners, using cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) methods to help with low mood, wellbeing, anxiety and behavioural difficulties.
CAMHS: Integrated Services for Looked After Children (ISL) CAMHS ISL (hacw.nhs.uk)	Referral: only by social worker or CAMHS.	Mental health support for looked after children. A looked after child is defined as a child who has been in the care of their local authority for more than 24 hrs.
SPECIALIST CAMHS (Tier 3) CAMHS Specialist (hacw.nhs.uk)	Referral: by any professional.	Specialist CAMHS is a multi-disciplinary team made up of psychiatrists, nurses, social workers, psychologists all with specialist training of working in mental health with children and young people who have more complex or severe difficulties.
Continence Nurse Continence Adult Service (hacw.nhs.uk)	Discuss referral with school nurse or paediatrician.	One paediatric continence nurse sits within the adult continence team.
Health Visitors (children 0-5 years) Worcestershire Health Visiting Service (startingwellworcs.nhs.uk)	Referral: Parent can phone direct. (telephone numbers can be found on the website)	Health Visitors provide a family focused service to ensure children and families have a positive start in life. They are community based to ensure the service continues to be accessible to all. Health Visitors will also provide support over the telephone.
Paediatric Occupational Therapy and Specialist Play Nursery Nurses Occupational Therapy Paediatric (hacw.nhs.uk)	Referral: by any professional including school SENCO	Paediatric Occupational Therapy enables children or young people to take part in daily life which is made up of many activities which they may be finding more difficult to participate in. These activities include self-care, being productive (going to nursery or school) and leisure activities like playtime.

Service	Who can refer	Comment
<p>Paediatric Physiotherapy Physiotherapy Paediatric (hacw.nhs.uk)</p>	<p>Referral: health professionals; Health Visitors, GPs and Consultants can refer children who meet the following criteria: Children aged between 0-18 years that have a Worcestershire GP. Children up to 19 years of age if they are in full-time education in a Worcestershire Special School</p>	<p>They work with children who have neurological, developmental, and orthopaedic conditions who may also have complex long-term medical, social and learning needs. The focus is on maximising a child or young person's physical ability within their everyday activities at home, in education and in their community.</p>
<p>School Health Nursing (children and young people aged 5-19) School Health Nursing (startingwellworcs.nhs.uk)</p>	<p>Referral: Via GP or school or parent can phone directly Young people (11-19 years) can self-refer via Chat Health service startingwellworcs.nhs.uk/chathealth</p>	<p>They provide a wide range of services to meet the needs of children, young people and their families. These include (but are not limited to): National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) School-aged Hearing Screening Home visits Time4U drop in service Health needs assessments School Health Nurses can also signpost to other services Safeguarding and Children in Need - attending case conferences, core groups, other relevant meetings, undertaking health assessments.</p>
<p>Speech and Language Therapy Childrens SaLT (hacw.nhs.uk)</p>	<p>If a parent is concerned about their child's speech, language, communication or feeding/swallowing - advice and referral can be made through their GP, Health Visitor, School Nurse or other professionals who may be involved with their child. Parents are also welcome to ring their local Speech and Language Team. Schools, Nurseries and other childcare settings can also refer on parent's behalf with their consent.</p>	<p>Children's centres: Every centre has a named speech and language therapist, regular talking walk-in sessions and therapy groups Child development centres: Speech and language therapists are part of the team Schools: Every mainstream school has a named speech and language therapist who visits.</p>

Service	Who can refer	Comment
Special School Nursing Special School Nursing (hacw.nhs.uk)	Referral: They are available within Special Schools at varying times and the school will always have a contact number for their allocated Special School health nurse.	The Special School Nursing service supports the health care needs of children and young people attending Worcestershire Special Schools.
Orchard Nursing Orchard Service North (hacw.nhs.uk) Orchard Service South (hacw.nhs.uk)	Referral: Referrals are accepted from a variety of sources, including acute hospital settings, community Paediatrics and the wider multi-disciplinary team.	Children's Community Nursing and Palliative Care Team. A multi-disciplinary team who provide holistic care to patients with a nursing need, this may be an acute illness or a long-term complex health need.

Prepared 20/4/22. Review date: 20/4/23.

Appendix 4: Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) glossary

Sometimes words and abbreviations are used by professionals and services which are unfamiliar.

We have tried to include the most used ones here, but it is not an exhaustive list. You can find more comprehensive lists on the SENDIASS and Healthwatch websites:

[Glossary Information - SENDIASS Worcestershire and Herefordshire](#)

[Jargon Buster | Healthwatch Worcestershire](#)

[A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [X](#) [Y](#) [Z](#)

Annual Review – If your child has an EHCP then the Local Authority (Worcestershire Children First) must review it at least annually. This is to see what progress your child is making and make sure everything is up to date - it's called an Annual Review.

CAMHS – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, this service provides assessment and treatment for children/young people where they are experiencing significant mental health difficulties.

[CAMHS \(hacw.nhs.uk\)](http://camhs.hacw.nhs.uk)

Carer – this is someone who provides support for a family member, partner or friend who needs help and cannot cope without their support. [\(See Parent carer below\)](#)

Code of Practice [\(see SEND Code of Practice below\)](#)

CCN – Autism and Complex Communications Team, specialist teachers, employed by Worcestershire County Council, who work with children and young people and provide support to schools

[Autism and Complex Communication Needs \(CCN\) Information \(WCC\)](#)

CYP – Children and young people

DLA – Disability Living Allowance (for children) is a benefit paid to families to help with extra costs, if the child meets the eligibility criteria.

[Disability Living Allowance \(DLA\) for children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Early Help - Early Help means providing help and support to a child, young person or their family as soon as it is identified they need additional help and support.

[Early Help Family Support | Worcestershire County Council](#)

EHCA – Education, Health and Care Assessment, if your child's school or setting can't meet your child's needs using the support they usually offer to children who need extra help, the County Council may carry out a needs assessment for your child. When your child's needs have been assessed a plan for meeting them may be drawn up. This plan is called an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

EHCP – Education, Health and Care Plan, is for children and young people with SEND who have had an EHCA and are found to need more support and it identifies their educational, health and social needs and sets out the additional support needed to support them.

EP or Ed Psych - Educational Psychologist, professionals who help children or young people who experience difficulties with their access to learning. These difficulties could be behavioural, social or emotional needs. [Educational Psychology information \(WCC\)](#)

FiP – Families in Partnership, is Worcestershire's [parent carer forum](#).

Graduated Response – Your child’s school, early years setting or education provider gives support to children and young people with SEND through the Graduated Response. The Graduated Response is the term used to describe a process of assessing, planning, doing and reviewing that progress is being made. Worcestershire County Council have taken the Graduated Response approach and have provided local guidance on improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Graduated Response (SEND support in education provision) SEND Local Offer

Local Authority (LA) – these are the administrative offices that provide services in their local area, here it is Worcestershire County Council.

Local Offer – SEND Local Offer is a website which provides information about provision families can expect to be available across education, health and social care for children and young people who have Special Educational Need (SEN) or are disabled, including those who do not have Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. **SEND Local Offer | Worcestershire County Council**

Occupational Therapist (OT) - Paediatric Occupational Therapy offer services for children and young people who may be experiencing difficulties or have a disability that impacts on daily life. This could involve self-care, play and school skills such as writing and organisation. **Paediatric OT (HWHCT)**

Parent Carer - If you have parental responsibility and you provide support for your child or young person with a Special Educational Need and/or Disability you are a parent carer.

Parent Carer Forum - is a group of parents and carers of disabled children who work with local authorities, education, health and other providers with the aim to make sure the services they plan and deliver meet the needs of disabled children and families. Families in Partnership (FiP) is the parent carer forum (PCF) in Worcestershire who receive DfE PCF funding. **Parent carer participation - Contact**

PIP – Personal Independence Payments, is the benefit paid to individuals (aged 16 and above) with a long-term physical or mental health condition or disability

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Reasonable Adjustments – school have a legal duty to try to remove the barriers in education a child or young person faces because of their disability, this is called ‘making reasonable adjustments’.

SEND Code of Practice – this is the legal guidance which tells local authorities, early years settings, schools, colleges, health and social care providers and others what they must and should do to identify, assess and provide for children and young people with SEN or disabilities.

SEND: guide for parents and carers - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

SEN Information Report - all schools must publish on their websites information about their policy and arrangements for supporting children with SEN. This must be kept up to date.

SEN Support - where a child or young person is identified as having Special Educational Needs, schools and settings should take action to remove barriers to child or young person’s learning and put effective special educational provision in place. This is called SEN support.

Sensory Impairment team – a team of professionals who are employed by Worcestershire County Council and they work with schools and settings to promote inclusive practice and positive outcomes for children and young people with visual, hearing and multisensory impairments.

Sensory Impairment team information

Signposting – this is when professionals direct people to other individuals, services, charities or organisations who can help them.

SEN – Special Educational Needs

SENCO or SENDCO – Special Educational Needs (Disability) Co-ordinator is the teacher or person who is responsible for assessing, planning and monitoring the progress of children with special educational needs in their educational setting.

SENDIASS – Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service provides free, impartial, information, advice and support on all matters relating to children and young people with SEND. **SENDIASS Worcestershire and Herefordshire (hwsendiass.co.uk)**

SEND – Special Educational Needs and/or Disability

SaLT – Speech and Language Therapy is for a child or young person with speech, language or communication problems or difficulties with swallowing, drinking or eating.

Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service (hacw.nhs.uk)

TAC or TAF – Team around the child or Team around the family is to bring together the family, child or young person and the professionals working with them to co-ordinate help and support.

Umbrella Pathway - is a diagnostic pathway that provides assessment and diagnosis of children and young people who present with neuro-developmental disorders due to Autism Spectrum Conditions.

Umbrella Pathway (hacw.nhs.uk)

WCC – Worcestershire County Council, is responsible for the delivery of services to children and young people across Worcestershire.

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SEND Local Offer worcestershire

