

Information Sheet: 2

Keep talking ...

Worried about an SEN issue - what can you do?

Have you thought about...?

- contacting your local parent partnership service for information, advice and support?
- speaking to the class teacher or the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator)?
- contacting the headteacher and/or governors?
- speaking to the Local Authority (LA)?
- asking for a meeting?

Do you usually attend reviews or parent evenings? You should always discuss concerns with your child's class teacher or tutor. If you would prefer not to wait until a parents' consultation evening to do this, contact the school and ask for an appointment, explaining why you are asking for the meeting. *Please remember it may be difficult for the teacher/tutor to see you during school hours.*

What can I do to take the issue further?

If you want to take the issue further, you could contact the school's SENCO. The SENCO has an advisory role in school and is responsible for the day to day working of the school's SEN policy. In a few schools the headteacher is also the SENCO. *You can ask to see a copy of the SEN policy which should explain how the school provides education for all children with SEN.*

Other people you can talk to in school about your concerns are:

- the headteacher
- the chair of the governing body
- the governor with responsibility for SEN
- the responsible person in the school

All of these people can be contacted through the school office.

Your local parent partnership service can support you with information or by providing you with access to someone who may be able to go with you to a meeting (e.g. an Independent Parental Supporter or a representative of a voluntary organisation).

Meetings to discuss issues are often used as a way to resolve differences. These can be meetings between the people who are in disagreement (the parties to a dispute) or they might involve a third party, perhaps someone from the Local Authority (LA), from a parent partnership service or from a voluntary organisation

What if my issue is with the LA?

If you have concerns with the LA about the statutory assessment process, perhaps over the content of your child's Statement of SEN or a refusal to assess, you should be offered the opportunity to meet with people involved in making decisions for the LA. Your parent partnership service can advise you about this. You should also have been given the name of a contact person at the LA (your case officer).

If you want to, you can take a friend or supporter with you to any meeting.

What is mediation?

In a few cases, mediation might be appropriate. Mediation is one of a number of different ways of resolving a disagreement and tends to be used when the people involved are finding it difficult to communicate about the issue. Mediation involves an impartial third party mediator who won't take sides.

The mediators are interested in helping people who disagree to find solutions that they can all agree to. They will help both parties to identify the issues that need to be sorted out and what can be done to resolve them. This

approach can bring out helpful ideas that no-one had considered before and can lead to acceptable solutions for both parties. The process of mediation can only be started if both parties are willing to join in. It is a confidential process and either party can withdraw at any time. Taking part in mediation may not resolve all the issues but it will not affect any rights you have in law regarding the disagreement, such as your right of appeal to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SEND).

Details of mediation services and arrangements in your area should be available from your child's school, the LA, your Parent Partnership Service and the local library.

How do I make a formal complaint?

Finally, every school, Local Authority (LA) and your Parent Partnership Service will have a formal complaints procedure, which can be followed if you feel your concerns have not been sorted out. Written information about this should be available from schools, the LA.

Useful Contacts

EAST LOCAL OFFICE	WEST LOCAL OFFICE
<p style="text-align: center;">South West Area Local Education Office Grosvenor House London Square, Cross Lanes Guildford GU1 1FA Tel: 01483 517900/901 Fax: 01483 517808</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">South East Area East Surrey Area Office Omnibus Lesbourne Road Reigate RH2 7JA Tel: 01737 737600 Fax: 01737 737912</p>
East Local Education Office	West Local Education Office
<p style="text-align: center;">North East Area NE-Epsom & Ewell Elmbridge, Spelthorne</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">North West Area Runnymede, Woking Surrey Heath</p>

<p>Area Special Needs Manager Amanda Hitchcock</p>	<p>Area Special Needs Manager Carole Gill</p>
<p>South East Local Education Office</p>	<p>South West Local Education Office</p>
<p>South East Area Mole Valley, Tandridge Reigate and Banstead Area Special Needs Manager Shelagh Green</p>	<p>South West Area Guildford, Waverley Area Special Needs Manager David Griffiths</p>
<p>Global Mediation</p>	<p>SEND</p>
<p>Global Mediation Ltd Elwood House, 42 Lytton Road Barnet, EN5 5BY Tel: 0208 441 1355 Email: send@globalmediation.co.uk</p>	<p>SEND 2nd Floor, Old Hall Mowden Hall, Staindrop Road Darlington DL3 9BG Tel: 01325 392760</p>