nasen EARLY YEARS SEND RESOURCES

Identifying and Supporting Children with SEND in the Early Years:

childminders



nasen Helping Everyone Achieve

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Identifying and Supporting Children with SEND in the Early Years:

childminders

A quick guide to support childminders to work with children in the early years with SEND.

This guide aims to:

- Explain what SEND is and summarise the legal requirements for childminders
- Support you in working with children, parents and families
- Suggest what effective practice for children with SEND in the early years might look like

You may also like to look at the other EY SEND resources available on the nasen website (www.nasen.org.uk) to help you gain a fuller understanding of SEND, or consult the 'Local Offer' on your Local Authority's website.



What is meant by 'Special Educational Needs and Disability' (SEND)?

A child has a special educational need (SEN) if he or she has **learning difficulty** or a **disability** which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

Special educational provision is any provision made for the child that is 'additional to' or 'different from' what is offered to other children of the same age in your setting.

In deciding whether a concern about a child's development may be a special educational need, it should be considered whether their needs might require special educational provision when they start school.

A child has a **learning difficulty** if they have 'a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others the same age' or 'a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age.'



An individual is **disabled** under the Equality Act 2010 if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long term' negative effect on their ability to do normal activities. Refer to the Act directly for definitions of 'substantial' and 'long term'; there is more information about this Act in the next section.

Children with SEN may have difficulties in one or more of these broad areas:

- Cognition and Learning
- Communication and Interaction
- Physical and Sensory
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health

Some children will come to the setting with special educational needs or a disability already identified. For some, difficulties with their development will begin to emerge while they are there. Research shows that responding to these difficulties promptly will help to reduce their impact on a child's learning and development as they grow older.

Key documents – principles and requirements

All early years providers are required to have arrangements in place to **identify** and **support** children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).

There are 3 key documents which inform you of your statutory duties and responsibilities for children with SEND:

The Equality Act (2010) protects people from discrimination at work and in wider society. Disability (which includes learning difficulties) is one of the protected characteristics under the Act and includes staff, parents and visitors, as well as the children in your setting.

Under the Equality Act, you must make '**reasonable adjustments**' to ensure that children (and others) with disabilities are not put at a substantial disadvantage by any policies, practice or physical aspects of your setting. This duty applies even if you do not currently have any children identified as having SEND. It also applies to parents or carers who come to your setting, for example to drop off or collect their children.

The reasonable adjustments duty includes three key requirements:

- to make adjustments to any provision, criterion or practice

- to make alterations to physical features
- to provide auxiliary aids and services

Two useful things to remember are:
- Whilst you must **anticipate** aspects of your setting that may discriminate against children with disabilities, it can be very helpful to review your setting with children and their families to ensure that adjustments are appropriate and effective
- Writing 'blanket policies' can cause indirect discrimination by excluding some children unintentionally – for example, a healthy snack policy may discriminate if there are no adjustments for a child with diabetes.

Detailed guidance on your duties are available on the Council for Disabled Children's website: https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/disabled-children-and-equality-act-2010-early-years

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2017) is mandatory for all early years providers in England. The guiding principles of this framework apply to all children, including those with special educational needs or disabilities:
- Every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured
- Children learn to be strong and independent through **positive relationships**
- Children learn and develop well in **enabling environments**, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers
- Children develop and learn in **different ways** and at **different rates**

The SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years (2015) is the statutory guidance for supporting children and young people with SEND. All providers of early years education are required to have regard to this code. Some of the requirements in the code state '**must**': these are statutory requirements with which you must comply. Others state '**should**', and you must have regard to these requirements and follow them, unless you have an exceptional reason not to.

Key guidance for childminders includes:
- You are encouraged to identify a person to act as the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo). If you are registered with a childminding agency or work as part of a network you may consider sharing the role between you
- Have clearly stated **procedures for identifying and meeting the needs** of children with SEN
- Work closely with **parents and carers**
- Implement a four-stage process known as the **graduated approach** to meeting individual needs

- Work with **outside agencies and other professionals**

If you work with an assistant you must make sure they are familiar with your policies for identifying and supporting children with SEND.

Some children may have an **Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)**; this is a legal document that states the child's needs and the provision required to meet these needs, and indicates that a child's needs are significantly greater than most children of their age. There is more information about this later in this guide.

Local Authority Advisors – Your Local Authority has responsibility for supporting you when you have a child or children with SEND in your setting. Many provide specific training for early years providers and there will often be an **Early Years SEND Advisor** or **Area SENCo**. Provision and titles vary between Local Authorities; you should make yourself aware of the arrangements in your area and ensure that you are accessing appropriate support.

Further information about the SEND Code of Practice is available in the nasen miniguide 'The SEND Code of Practice: 0-25'. It is also important to access the full SEND Code of Practice for detailed advice: chapter 5 is specific to the Early Years Foundation Stage, with references to other parts of the code that apply to all phases.

Welcoming children with SEND and their families

You may be the first person outside of the family with whom parents have left their child; this can be daunting for many parents but even more so for parents of children with SEND. It is important to assure them that they and their child are welcome and that you will work with them at every stage. Be honest if you are not familiar or experienced with their child's needs, take time to listen to the information they give you, ask for names and contact details of professionals they are working with (for example their Health Visitor or Speech and Language Therapist).

Here are some tips to help make this relationship effective:

- Arrange a time when you can meet with parents/carers and the child somewhere quiet, have some quiet toys for the child and his/her siblings so that you can really talk … and listen. If you have an assistant perhaps they can be on hand to play with the children.



- Ask the questions you would ask about any child – who is important to them? What do they like to do as a family? What does the child like to do? What do they like to eat? Do they sleep well?
- Ask questions about what the child needs to support them; parents know this better than most.
- Ask about other professionals who are involved and ask if you can contact them
- Get permission for you to contact support services

In other cases, it may be that you identify a concern about a child's development and will want to discuss this with parents. This will always be easier if you discuss children's progress with parents on a regular basis.

Some tips for initial meetings to discuss concerns about a child's progress:

- Describe – explain what your concerns are, give examples and explain the effect on the child's development
- Invite – parents to give their views; have they noticed anything similar at home?
- Agree – what is going to happen next? Who will do what and when?
- Close – make sure that you finish the meeting on a positive note and that parents/carers know that they can take their time to think about the discussions and come back with questions.

You should always be aware of the cultural values of the family and ensure that you and others working with the child and family are sensitive to them. Wherever possible, make sure that information is available in the family's home language, that you take clear and concise notes of meetings, and that you allow plenty of time for questions.

Advice from a setting:

"Get to know the child and involve the parents and other professionals who are involved to ensure a consistent approach to supporting the child"

A university nursery

Person centred working

The SEND Code of Practice puts children and their families at the centre of all processes and practices, including decision-making. The child's 'voice' (whether verbal, or interpreted through behaviours) should be at the centre of and inform all practice; listening to the child (and their parents or carers) and acting on this basis is crucial. There are many resources available online to help you develop person-centred practice.

Inclusive practice

'Inclusion' describes the principle that providers should actively promote participation and reduce the barriers that children with SEND may experience while they are in your care. It may be defined as 'a process of identifying, understanding and breaking down barriers to participation and belonging' (Early Childhood Forum) or 'a journey with a clear direction and purpose: equality of opportunity, for all children and young

people' (Council for Disabled Children). You should regularly reflect on how inclusive your practice is.

Inclusive Environments

Some of the **environmental** aspects you should consider include:

- Attitudes of people around your setting (including assistants and others who may have contact with children): do they make the environment welcoming to everyone?
- Access to the outdoor environment
- Accessibility of the environment
- Accessible resources with opportunities for children to be independent
- Seating arrangements for activities and meal times
- Washing, toileting and changing facilities
- Sensory issues such as:
  – Appropriate lighting
  – Sound and noise levels
- Opportunities for independence

Advice from a setting:

"There has to be an inclusive culture permeating the whole school, including office staff"

A special school and nursery

Inclusive Policies and Routines

You may have had some of your routines in place for a long time, for example, going to the shops on the way home from school, or everyone sitting down for snack together. You should regularly reflect on these decisions with inclusion in mind – might a trip to the shops be too much for a child who has mobility difficulties? Is there a child who finds sitting with others very difficult – would he or she find a rolling snack time easier to cope with?

Reasonable adjustments may be required to prevent disadvantage, and the likelihood is that changes will benefit many children for different reasons.

Some areas you could reflect on are:

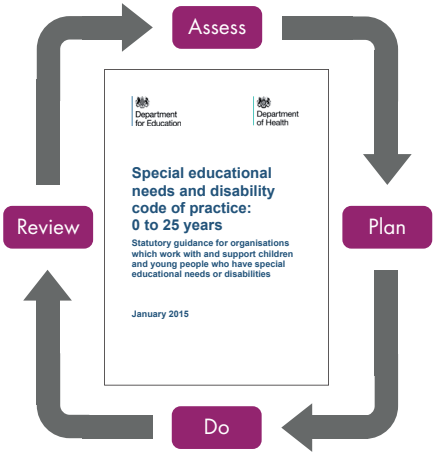
- Timing of activities in your day
- Range of choices available; this can be too much or too little for some children
- Routine for toileting
- Routine for dropping off or picking up children
- Whether practices are 'multi-sensory' i.e. appealing to all the senses, and not reliant on, for example, listening
- How transitions from one activity to another are handled

It can be useful to spend some time observing and noting any areas or activities that appear not to be accessed by some children or any particular child. Often very simple changes can make all the difference.



A graduated approach

One of the key aspects of the SEND Code of Practice is the four-stage process of 'assess, plan, do, review'; this is known as a 'graduated approach' to planning for and meeting the needs of children with SEND in your school. This process may be begun as soon as concerns are identified; do not wait for a diagnosis.



Assess

Assessment for SEN in the early years should be seen in its broadest sense. The starting point should be **parents or carers**, as they will have important information about and observations of their child.

Listen carefully to what parents tell you; sometimes the smallest details can give you a lead on where a difficulty lies or a strategy that will help you to support the child in your setting. Useful things to invite parents to tell you about include:

- Routines at home, mealtimes, bedtimes, amount of sleep
- Experience of being with other children
- Responses to new situations or people
- Relationships with other family members (including siblings and grandparents)
- Other professionals or medical investigations; either on going or in the past
- What parents do to manage concerns at home

If a child has had contact with other agencies (physiotherapist, speech therapy or paediatrician for example) you should consider their reports as part of your assessment process. This should include the **Integrated Review** if the child is over 2 years old. You will need parent/carer permission to access these reports. Many children attend multiple settings at this stage (including preschool and care by members of the family); you should gather evidence from these providers when appropriate.

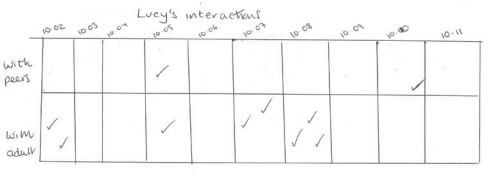
As with much in the early years, **observation** is key to understanding a child's development. You should plan to supplement your day-to-day observations with some more focussed observation strategies of both the child's strengths and areas for development. Some useful strategies include:

Verbatim/narrative observation: Plan several periods of 5 to 10 minutes where you can unobtrusively watch and record everything you see the child do. Avoid making any judgements as you write, be as objective as possible. It is impossible to capture everything so make a number of observations before making drawing any conclusions. It is important to capture

different activities, different times of day and different days of the week.

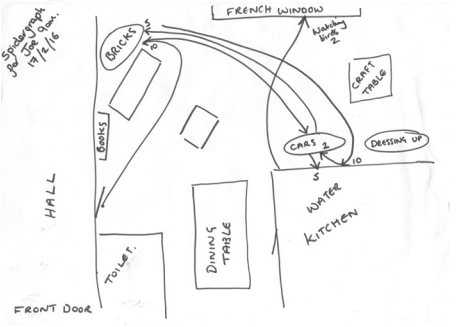
These observations will show you what a child does when their activity is not being directed: what or who they choose to play with, how they respond to the environment around them and whether they stop and listen when you are talking to everyone, for example. Are they able to make a choice of activity? How long do they stick with something they have chosen to do?

Structured observation: In this type of observation you will be looking out for a particular behaviour, for example, starting a conversation with an adult, taking turns or changing activity, for periods of 5 to 10 minutes. You make a mark for each time the child performs the target behaviour in a set number of minutes. Again, you need to do this several times and in different contexts.



These observations will tell you the frequency of a particular behaviour. You may notice for example that a child talks to others more often outdoors than indoors.

'Spidergraph' observation: Start with a sketch map of your environment (inside and out), with all your activity areas or storage marked. Observing again for a period of 5 to 10 minutes, mark the child's journey around the environment, perhaps with a note of how long they spend at a particular activity.



These observations will show you where a child chooses to go; are they 'flitting' from activity to activity without engaging fully in anything? Do they follow a repetitive route around the activities? Do they avoid the areas that might require a particular skill (such as the home play area or bookcase)?

Incidental notes or observations (sticky notes, incident records, and home/setting diaries): These observations will help you identify patterns or common circumstances. It can be useful to sort them by different criteria – time of day, day of the week, adult-led or child-initiated.

One to one play: when playing with a child, allow them to lead the play, then copy what they are doing and add a simple commentary, avoiding asking questions and allowing plenty of time between comment for the child to respond. Remember you are observing not testing. It is interesting to note whether

the child notices or watches what you are doing; do they begin to move their play on, involve you, or begin to copy small changes you make to the game?

Plan

Following your assessments and observations, you need to plan what you are going to do to address the needs that you have identified. Assessments will have helped you to see patterns in behaviours, possible barriers, and areas of strength and need; these will inform your planning. Again, the SEND Code of Practice is clear that early years settings should be working with parents and the child on developing this plan.

You must ask yourself two important questions to begin with:

- What is important **to** the child?
- What is important **for** the child?

You will find these out by talking with parents and watching and talking with the child. With these two pieces of information in mind, you should go on to agree together what **outcomes** everybody wants to achieve, i.e. what you want the child to be able to do. These outcomes should reflect shared priorities; outcomes are reached when everybody involved works together. Outcomes should be recorded in language that everybody recognises and you should be able to make a clear judgement as to whether the child has reached that outcome after the agreed time; this is often referred to as a 'SMART' outcome (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound).



An example of an outcome might be: 'I will be able to put my shoes and socks on, by the end of December'.

Your agreed outcome may need to be broken down into smaller steps or into the different skills that the child would need ('I will know which shoes and socks are mine'; 'I can balance on one foot and then the other'). These should also be recorded and activities or strategies planned to give the child lots of opportunities to practise that skill. You should also think about how you are going to support the child with these skills until they have developed them for themselves. This is where the 'important to' comes in; children will engage and learn much more easily when the strategies you have planned involve activities they enjoy and feel familiar and confident with.

How you record your plan is up to you but it is useful to record:

- The child's name, birthdate and age at the time the plan is written
- Your name and contact details (so that other practitioners working with the child can contact you when appropriate)

- The names of parent/carers, staff and other professionals involved in drawing up the plan
- What is important to the child
- The outcomes agreed, the smaller steps towards them. and how you will know that they have been achieved
- Who is going to work with the child on the activities planned, when and how often
- What everybody can do to support the child
- The date when the plan will be reviewed

Advice from a setting:

"Follow the child's interests, being mindful that things can change quickly"

A day nursery

Do

Once your plan is in place, it is important to ensure that the provision and interventions planned are implemented and maintained.

This may have implications for other children's activities and care, which will need careful consideration.

Make sure anybody else who is working with the child (for example an assistant) is clear what you want the child to learn, practise or experience. This is not always obvious to other people – for example, if you are working on fine-motor skills while playing with the construction materials, this must be made clear so that the child is given as many opportunities to practise those skills as possible. You should also support and encourage parents to be involved at home; skills children are learning with you can be practised at home, often as part of their home routine, for example, getting dressed or when doing the shopping.

To ensure that support and planned interventions happen, everyone who works with the child should:

- Consider carefully how you will share outcomes and progress between everybody who is involved with the child
- Give children time to become familiar with new strategies or interventions
- Put aside all the resources and equipment you will need to provide the interventions and activities so that they are at hand when you need them
- Identify the times of the day when the child will be able to work on specific activities
- Identify any key words or phrases you may be using with a child and display them somewhere that will remind you to use them.
- Consider how interventions and the child's responses will be recorded.

Review

A graduated approach is a cycle of actions that should be 'revisited in increasing detail and with increasing frequency, to identify the best way of securing good progress'.

Your plans and interventions should be reviewed in line with the date identified on the plan.

Who attends the review meeting will vary according to what sort of review it is – a '**transition to school**' review or an **annual review of an EHCP** should be planned well enough in advance for any outside agencies who have been involved with the child to attend or submit a report. In this case, you need to make sure you have a clear agenda to ensure that the time is used efficiently and that all the information required is gathered.

Interim reviews – You are of course likely to meet parents or carers on a very regular basis when dropping off or picking up children but it is important to have a more in-depth discussion at regular intervals to review a child's progress and adjust or make new plans.

At the review meeting, you are reviewing the child's progress towards the outcomes you agreed at the planning stage. You should also evaluate how effective the support and interventions you planned were.

If the child has developed the skills or knowledge you were aiming for, you should discuss what the next steps should be. Remember to build on what has been achieved already.

If the child has not made the progress you were looking for, you need to think about what needs to be done differently – you may need to break the steps down further or change the activities that you had planned.

Some things to remember at review meetings:

- Apply the principles of person-centred working
- It is useful to have some observations or photographs to share
- Parents need the opportunity to share what they have observed at home
- Children sometimes do not develop in the way we are expecting; keep the meeting focussed on the planned outcomes and strategies but allow some time to share other developmental progress
- Keep your language honest but positive; 'yet' is a key word, for example: 'he cannot feed himself yet, but we can support him to develop the skills to begin to do so'
- It might be appropriate to agree that a strategy or activity is not appropriate at this time and change it

Further information about this is available in the nasen miniguides 'The SEND Code of Practice: 0-25' and 'SEN Support and the Graduated Approach'.



Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment

In most cases it is expected that a child with SEND will be supported and make progress through your own high quality practice and your planned, focussed intervention activities. Other professionals working with you will give you advice and ideas for activities you can do. For a small number of children, who have not made expected progress despite the additional actions put in place by the setting, it may be necessary for the Local Authority to carry out an assessment of the child's needs and for an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) to be drawn up, in order to ensure the best outcomes for the child.

Parents can request that the Local Authority consider carrying out an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment. Your Local Authority will offer parents support in making this request. You will be asked to provide reports on the child's development and progress which will contribute to the assessment process (see advice under '**Working with outside agencies**' for advice on the content of reports).

Not all children referred will be considered suitable for this assessment, but parents will be informed either way.

Education Health and Care Plans detail:

- the views, interests and aspirations of the child and his/her parents/carers
- the child's special educational needs
- the child's health needs
- the child's social care needs
- the outcomes sought for the child
- the provision required to meet those outcomes
- any health care provision required
- any social care provision required
- the name of the setting the child will attend
- any personal budget allocated

Your responsibilities are to:

- Ensure that you have implemented and reviewed planned interventions and advice from specialists
- Ensure that you have records of all interventions, plans and reviews that have taken place for the child
- Support parents in making a request and throughout the process
- Continue to support the child within the setting, following the graduated approach
- If issued, carry out the duties set out in the EHCP

Further information about EHCPs is available in the nasen miniguide 'The SEND Code of Practice: 0-25' and in the 'SEN and Disability in the Early Years Toolkit' produced by the CDC



Working with outside agencies

Some children's needs require specialist investigation and support. Often these needs will have been identified, perhaps by health professionals such as the family's G.P. or health visitor. Sometimes, when you have implemented strategies within the setting, you may feel you need further advice. All children under the age of 5 have a Health Visitor who will be familiar with local referral processes for services such as Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy or audiology. These should be available on the Local Health Authority website, often under the 'Local Offer'. Your Local Authority Advisor, Area SENCo, Childminder Agency or Childminder Network may also be able to support you in accessing services.

It is important for children and their families that services work well together. You can help this happen by:

- Ensuring that you are familiar with roles, referral processes and contact arrangements for local services
- Providing reports promptly when requested and encouraging parents/carers to share reports from other professionals with you
- Welcoming outside professionals to your setting, providing them with clear information about the timings of your day and the activities in which they are likely to observe the child engaged, as this will help them to know how typical their observations are

You may be asked to provide a report for a child when they attend an appointment with an outside professional; many children perform differently in unusual environments (such as a medical clinic) so try to paint a picture of the child in your setting.

- Is the child able to follow routines in the setting?
- How does the child interact with others of his/her age?
- What activities does the child choose to do?
- Can the child make choices for example at snack time?
- How does the child separate from parents/carers, how long do they take to settle? How do they respond when parents return?
- How far does the child engage with adult-led/child-initiated activities?
- What other concerns do you have about the child?

Try to keep your writing focussed and concise but remember to mention the child's strengths and interests.

Sometimes professionals may ask to observe the child in your setting; these visits can be very helpful as they will have many good strategies and advice to share. Try to make the child's day as normal as possible.

Advice from a setting

"Ensure you work closely with advisors and ask for help if and when needed"

A kindergarten

Transitions

Children with SEND may find transitions difficult, and there is likely to be a great deal of information to be transferred when they move from one setting to another. You have an important role to play in ensuring that parents are confident with transition processes, as well as supporting the child to manage these transitions successfully.

Some of the planned transitions children make include:

- Between home and you
- Between you and another Early Years provider
- Between specialist provision or a regular appointment (such as Speech and Language therapy) and you

If there are a number of other professionals involved, you must ensure that they are aware of planned transitions well in advance, especially if there are going to be transition meetings.

When a transition to another setting is planned, you should consider:

- Who should information be shared with and have parents given appropriate permission.
- If the child attends multiple settings, what practical systems can you put into place for sharing outcomes, plans and progress?
- Attending meetings with other professionals when appropriate
- Do the staff in the receiving setting need training and where can that be accessed?
- Will the child need additional visits to a new setting?
- Are there resources or equipment that need to be shared or transferred?

Support for parents, carers and families

There are a number of sources of support for parents that you should be aware of, including:

Local Offer – Local Authorities have a duty to publish a 'Local Offer' on their website. The Local Offer details services, facilities, organisations and activities open to children and young people with SEND in the local area.

Parent Carer Forums – There is a national network of parent carer forums across England. These are independent, parent-led forums working with Local Authorities and CCGs. Details of your local forum can be found on the National Network of Parent Carer Forums website or on your Local Offer website.

SEND Information, Advice and Support Service – This national service, available locally (although sometimes under different titles), provides support and advice to families involved with SEND services. Contact details will be found on the Local Offer website.

There are also many groups associated with particular special educational needs and disabilities; specialist professionals



may be able to advise you on these and you may wish to support some families in accessing websites, helplines, written materials or groups.

Further information is available in the nasen miniguide: 'Working in partnership with parents and carers'

Funding

Local Authorities differ in the way that they provide funding to early years settings; all local authorities provide a **Disability Access Fund** – this is a one-off payment to settings supporting a three or four year-old who is taking up their free entitlement and who is receiving Disability Living Allowance. You should contact your Local Authority for details of how to claim this funding; details should be on the Local Offer web pages.



Resources

nasen's other miniguides
www.nasen.org.uk/miniguides/

nasen SEND Gateway – information for education providers
http://www.sendgateway.org.uk/

CDC and 4Children SEN and disability in the Early Years – A Toolkit
https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachemnt/early-years-toolkit-merged.pdf

The Communication Trust: Speech, Language and Communication
https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/

Contact: Information, advice and support for families and professionals
https://www.cafamily.org.uk

The Foundation Years
https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/

PACEY (Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years
https://www.pacey.org.uk/

Childcare Works (Supporting Early Year and Childcare Providers to deliver 30 hours)
http://www.childcareworks.co.uk/

There are many other useful sources of support; your Local Authority should be able to direct you to reliable resources on their Local Offer website.

nasen
Helping Everyone Achieve

About nasen

nasen is the leading UK professional association embracing all special and additional educational needs and disabilities. The organisation promotes the education, training, development and support of all those working within the special and additional educational needs and disabilities sector. Membership of nasen is an invaluable source of advice, offering an exclusive and vital range of benefits to support teachers, governors, teaching assistants and the entire education support network in the delivery of high-quality inclusive practice.

Visit www.nasen.org.uk for more information about what nasen can do for you.

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