Understanding SEND

in Barking and Dagenham

A guide to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, acronyms, services and professionals

Prepared by Sycamore Trust UK for parent carers

Acronyms A–Z	Local services	Professionals	Useful contacts

Welcome

Making sense of the SEND world

Navigating the SEND system can often feel overwhelming. Families are introduced to a wide range of professionals, services and terminology that may be unfamiliar.

This booklet explains…

- Common SEND acronyms and terminology
- Local services available in Barking and Dagenham
- The professionals and job roles you may come across
- Where to find further information and support

How to use it

Keep it handy and look up a term whenever you hear something unfamiliar — in a meeting, a letter or a report.

It is always fine to ask a professional: **"What does that mean?"**

Every journey is different

Every child's journey is different, and not all services or professionals will be involved with every family.

What's inside

1	Common SEND acronyms A–Z
2	Barking and Dagenham services and what they do
3	Professionals and job titles explained
4	Useful websites and contacts
5	My notes

Publication date: June 2026. Information and services may change over time — please check individual websites and organisations for the most up-to-date information.

1 Common SEND acronyms

From AAC to YP

This section explains common acronyms and terms that families may hear when speaking with schools, health services, social care teams or the Local Authority.

Each term has a coloured label to show which area it belongs to:

Needs & conditions	Education	Health & therapy	Communication
Social care & safety	Money & benefits	Services & roles	

A

AAC – Augmentative and Alternative Communication
Methods of communication used to support people who have difficulties with speech, such as communication boards, apps or devices.
Communication

ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
A neurodevelopmental condition that can affect attention, impulsivity and activity levels.
Needs & conditions

AP – Alternative Provision
Education arranged for children who cannot attend mainstream school for various reasons.
Education

APDR – Assess, Plan, Do, Review
A cycle that forms the graduated approach schools should follow to support children and young people with SEND.
Education

ARM – Annual Review Meeting
A yearly meeting to review an Education, Health and Care Plan.
Education

ARP – Additionally Resourced Provision
A specialist provision within a mainstream school for children with specific needs, such as autism.
Education

ASD – Autism Spectrum Disorder
A diagnostic term still used by many professionals. Many autistic people and organisations simply prefer the term "autism".
Needs & conditions

B

BSL – British Sign Language
A visual language used by members of the Deaf community.
Communication

BSP – Behaviour Support Plan
A school-based document designed to assist those with behavioural needs.
Education

C

CAF – Common Assessment Framework
A non-statutory method of assessment which can be used by social care, health or education. Many areas now use an Early Help Assessment instead.
Social care & safety

CAMHS – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
NHS services that support children and young people with emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties.
Health & therapy

CBT – Cognitive Behaviour Therapy
A type of therapy that helps people understand the connection between thoughts, feelings and behaviours.
Health & therapy

CIN – Child in Need
A child who requires additional services to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development.
Social care & safety

CoP – SEND Code of Practice
Statutory guidance for organisations in England that work with children and young people aged 0–25 with SEND.
Education

CWDT – Children with Disabilities Team
A specialist social care team that supports disabled children and their families.
Social care & safety

D

DCO – Designated Clinical Officer
A senior NHS professional responsible for ensuring health services meet SEND duties.
Health & therapy

DCS – Director of Children's Services
The most senior officer responsible for children's education, social care and safeguarding services within the Local Authority.
Services & roles

DLA – Disability Living Allowance
A benefit for children under 16 who have additional care or mobility needs.
Money & benefits

DMO – Designated Medical Officer
A senior doctor who advises on health aspects of SEND and EHCPs.
Health & therapy

DSL – Designated Safeguarding Lead
The person in a school responsible for safeguarding and child protection concerns.
Social care & safety

DSP – Dedicated Specialist Provision
A specialist provision within a mainstream school designed to support pupils with additional needs.
Education

E

EBSA – Emotionally Based School Avoidance
When a child experiences significant emotional distress or anxiety that impacts their ability to attend school.
Needs & conditions

EHCNA – Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment
The assessment process used to determine whether a child requires an Education, Health and Care Plan.
Education

EHCP – Education, Health and Care Plan
A legal document that sets out a child or young person's needs and the support they require.
Education

EMHP – Education Mental Health Practitioner
A practitioner who provides early intervention support for children experiencing mild to moderate mental health difficulties.
Health & therapy

EOTAS – Education Other Than At School
Educational provision arranged when a child is unable to attend school.
Education

EP – Educational Psychologist
A professional who specialises in child development, learning and emotional wellbeing.
Services & roles

EPS – Educational Psychology Service
The service that employs Educational Psychologists.
Services & roles

EWO – Education Welfare Officer
A professional who works with schools and families where school attendance is a concern.
Education

EYFS – Early Years Foundation Stage
The statutory framework that sets standards for learning and development for children from birth to age five.
Education

F

FSM – Free School Meals
Government-funded meals available to eligible children.
Money & benefits

G

GDPR – General Data Protection Regulation
A law that explains how organisations should gather, use and manage personal data. In the UK this is the UK GDPR, alongside the Data Protection Act 2018.
Services & roles

GP – General Practitioner
A family doctor based in the community. Your GP is usually the first person to speak to about health worries and can refer to other services.
Health & therapy

H

HI – Hearing Impairment
A partial or complete loss of hearing.

Needs & conditions

I

IEP – Individual Education Plan
A document outlining targets and support for a child.

Education

ILP – Individual Learning Plan
A plan outlining a child's learning goals and support.

Education

IPSEA – Independent Provider of Special Education Advice
A national charity providing free legal advice and information on SEND law.

Services & roles

L

LA – Local Authority
The local council responsible for education, social care and SEND services.

Services & roles

LAC – Looked After Child
A child who is in the care of the Local Authority.

Social care & safety

LADO – Local Authority Designated Officer
The officer responsible for managing allegations against adults working with children.

Social care & safety

LO – Local Offer
Information provided by the Local Authority about services available to children and young people with SEND and their families.

Services & roles

LSA – Learning Support Assistant
A member of staff who provides additional support to children in educational settings.

Education

M

MASH – Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
A team of professionals from different agencies who work together to assess safeguarding concerns.
Social care & safety

MDT – Multi-Disciplinary Team
A group of professionals from different services working together to support a child or young person.
Health & therapy

MHST – Mental Health Support Team
A team that provides early intervention support for emotional wellbeing and mental health difficulties in schools.
Health & therapy

MLD – Moderate Learning Difficulties
A learning difficulty that impacts a child's ability to access learning without additional support.
Needs & conditions

MSI – Multi-Sensory Impairment
A condition involving both hearing and visual impairment.
Needs & conditions

N

NAS – National Autistic Society
A UK charity providing information, advice and support relating to autism.
Services & roles

NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Training
A term used for young people aged 16–24 who are not involved in education, employment or training.
Education

NHS – National Health Service
The publicly funded healthcare system in England.
Health & therapy

O

OT – Occupational Therapist
A professional who supports sensory needs, independence and everyday functioning.
Health & therapy

P

PD – Physical Disability A physical condition that impacts a person's mobility or physical functioning.	Needs & conditions
PDA – Pathological Demand Avoidance A profile that describes people whose main characteristic is to avoid everyday demands and expectations to an extreme extent. It is usually seen as a profile of autism, and many people now prefer the term "Pervasive Drive for Autonomy".	Needs & conditions
PECS – Picture Exchange Communication System A communication system that uses pictures to help individuals communicate.	Communication
PEP – Personal Education Plan A plan used to support the educational needs of a looked-after child.	Education
PfA – Preparing for Adulthood The process of supporting young people with SEND to prepare for adulthood, including employment, independent living and community inclusion.	Education
PIP – Personal Independence Payment A benefit for people aged 16 to State Pension age with disabilities or long-term health conditions.	Money & benefits
PMLD – Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties A severe learning disability combined with additional physical or sensory needs.	Needs & conditions
Portage – Home-visiting educational service Support at home for pre-school children with SEND and their families. In Barking and Dagenham this is the Portage and Inclusion Education Service.	Services & roles
PRU – Pupil Referral Unit A specialist educational setting for children who cannot attend mainstream school.	Education

Q

QFT – Quality First Teaching
High-quality teaching that meets the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND.

Education

S

SALT – Speech and Language Therapist
A professional who supports speech, language and communication needs. You may also see SLT.

Health & therapy

SEMH – Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs
A category of SEND relating to emotional wellbeing and mental health.

Needs & conditions

SEN – Special Educational Needs
Learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for a child or young person to learn than most others of the same age.

Needs & conditions

SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
The overall term for children and young people who need extra help with learning because of a learning difficulty or disability.

Needs & conditions

SENDCO – Special Educational Needs and Disability Coordinator
The person within a school or nursery responsible for coordinating SEND provision. Also called the SENCO.

Education

SENDIASS – SEND Information, Advice and Support Service
An independent service providing information, advice and support to children, young people and families.

Services & roles

SENDIST – Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal
An independent tribunal that hears appeals when families disagree with certain Local Authority decisions relating to SEND. Its official name is the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability).

Services & roles

SLCN – Speech, Language and Communication Needs
Difficulties with talking, understanding language or social communication.

Needs & conditions

SLD – Severe Learning Difficulties
Significant learning difficulties that affect most areas of learning, communication and independence.

Needs & conditions

SpLD – Specific Learning Difficulties
Specific difficulties affecting learning, such as dyslexia, dyscalculia or dyspraxia.

Needs & conditions

T

TA – Teaching Assistant
A member of school staff who supports teaching and learning.

Education

TAC – Team Around the Child
A meeting bringing together professionals supporting a child.

Social care & safety

TAF – Team Around the Family
A meeting bringing together professionals supporting the whole family.

Social care & safety

TEACCH – Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication-Handicapped Children
A structured approach commonly used to support autistic individuals. This is the original name, which is now seen as outdated; today it is usually just called TEACCH.

Communication

U

UC – Universal Credit
A benefit to help with living costs, including additional support for some families of disabled children.

Money & benefits

V

VI – Visual Impairment
Partial or complete loss of sight.

Needs & conditions

Y

YP – Young Person
A person over compulsory school age and under 25.

Education

2 Barking and Dagenham services

What they do

Below are some of the local services and sources of support that families in Barking and Dagenham may come across. You can find details for most of them on the **Barking and Dagenham SEND Local Offer**.

Information, advice and parent voice

Barking and Dagenham SEND Local Offer

Brings together information about education, health, care, support and activities for children and young people with SEND and their families.

SENDIASS

Provides free, confidential and impartial information, advice and support about SEND, including education, health and social care matters.

Just Say Parent Carer Forum

The Department for Education recognised Parent Carer Forum for Barking and Dagenham, giving parent carers a voice and working with local services to improve support.

Speak Up Young People Forum

A forum for young people with SEND in Barking and Dagenham to share their views and take part in local participation opportunities.

Family support

Family Hubs and Family Navigators

Family Hubs in Barking, Dagenham and Marks Gate provide information, advice and guidance for families with children aged 0–19, and up to 25 for young people with SEND. Family Navigators can help families find local and specialist support.

Early Help

Support for families before difficulties become more serious, helping families access the right help at the right time.

Children and Young People Disability Hub

Supports families in Barking and Dagenham with a child under 18 who has SEND, including activities during term time and school holidays.

Short Breaks 4 Me

A short breaks service for eligible families with disabled children or young people, offering leisure activities for children and a break from caring for families.

Education

Educational Psychology Service

Works with families, schools and educational settings to promote inclusion and support positive outcomes for children and young people.

Portage and Inclusion Education Service

Early years support for young children with SEND and their families, including home visiting (Portage).

Health

Community Medical Paediatrics

Specialist assessment and support where there are concerns about a child's health, development or educational progress — including suspected autism, motor difficulties, sensory impairment, developmental delay and statutory work linked to EHCPs.

Child Development Centre

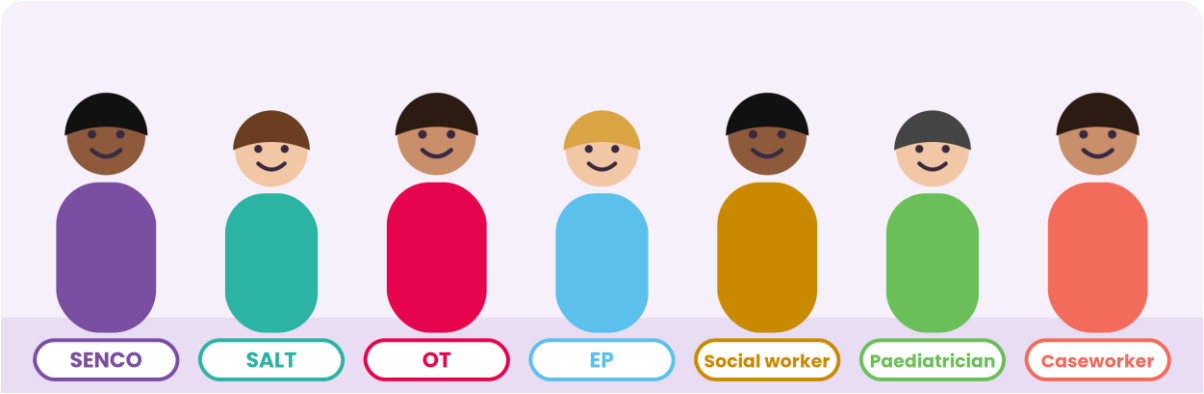
Brings together services such as community paediatrics, specialist nursing and therapy support for children with developmental or medical needs.

School Nursing and Specialist School Nursing

Provides health advice, support and signposting for children and young people, including those attending specialist settings.

3 Professionals explained

Who's who in the SEND world



Families may meet a range of professionals. The descriptions below explain what each role usually involves. Job titles can vary, so if you are not sure who someone is, ask them to explain their role.

Local Authority

Director of Children's Services (DCS)

The most senior officer responsible for children's education, social care and safeguarding services.

Head of SEND

Oversees SEND services within the Local Authority, ensures statutory duties are met and leads the strategic development of SEND provision.

SEND Caseworker or EHCP Coordinator

Coordinates EHCP assessments, annual reviews and amendments, and acts as a main point of contact within the Local Authority for a child's EHCP.

Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

Works with schools and families where attendance is causing concern.

School and education

SENDCO

Coordinates SEND provision within schools, liaises with families and professionals, and helps make sure the right support is in place.

Educational Psychologist (EP)

Assesses children's learning, development and emotional wellbeing and advises families and schools on support strategies.

Health and therapy

Community Paediatrician

Assesses developmental and medical concerns that may affect learning, wellbeing or day-to-day functioning.

Occupational Therapist (OT)

Supports sensory needs, independence and everyday living skills.

Speech and Language Therapist (SALT)

Supports speech, language and communication needs.

CAMHS Practitioner

Supports children and young people experiencing mental health difficulties.

School Nurse

Supports children's health and emotional wellbeing.

Social care and family support

Social Worker

Assesses need and coordinates support for children, young people and families where social care input is required.

MASH Practitioner

Screens safeguarding concerns and helps decide what support or intervention may be needed.

Family Navigator

Helps families find information, services and support through Barking and Dagenham's Family Hubs.

Social Prescriber

Connects families with community services and support.

Advice and parent voice

SENDIASS Adviser

Provides impartial SEND information, advice and support to children, young people and parent carers.

Parent Carer Forum Coordinator

Works with families and services to improve SEND provision and make sure parent carer voices are heard.

4 Useful websites and contacts

Where to find more help

The links below may be useful for further information, advice and support. Please check websites directly for the most up-to-date details.

In Barking and Dagenham

Organisation	How they can help	Website and contact
Barking and Dagenham SEND Local Offer	Local SEND information, services and activities.	localoffer.lbbd.gov.uk
LBBD Local Offer (council website)	The council's Local Offer pages.	lbbd.gov.uk – Local Offer
Barking and Dagenham SENDIASS	Free, impartial SEND advice. 020 8593 4422.	carerscentre.org.uk/iassinfo
Just Say Parent Carer Forum	Barking and Dagenham's Parent Carer Forum.	justsayforum.online
Our Hubs BD	Family Hubs and SEND information.	ourhubsbd.london
Short Breaks 4 Me	Short breaks for eligible families.	shortbreaks4me.co.uk
Sycamore Trust UK	Support for autistic people and their families. 020 8517 9317.	sycamoretrust.org.uk

National organisations

Organisation	How they can help	Website and contact
National Autistic Society	Information, advice and support about autism.	autism.org.uk
IPSEA	Free legal advice on SEND law.	ipsea.org.uk
Contact	Advice for families with disabled children.	contact.org.uk
Family Fund	Grants for families of disabled children.	familyfund.org.uk
Cerebra	Help for children with brain conditions.	cerebra.org.uk
KIDS	Support for disabled children and families.	kids.org.uk
Council for Disabled Children	Information about SEND policy and rights.	councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk
NHS	Health information and services.	nhs.uk
Government benefits information	Official benefits information (DLA, PIP, UC).	gov.uk/browse/benefits

5 My notes

Words I've heard and want to ask about

Write down any new words, acronyms or names you hear, so you can look them up or ask about them later.

Word or acronym	Where I heard it	What it means / who to ask

Thank you for reading

Sycamore Trust UK is a registered charity supporting autistic children, young people, adults and their families across Barking & Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge.

Call us	Visit us	Find us online
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Disclaimer

This booklet gives **general information only** to help parent carers understand common SEND terms, services and roles. It is not legal, medical or professional advice. For advice about your child's needs or your rights, please speak to Barking and Dagenham SENDIASS, IPSEA or a qualified professional.

Information and services may change over time. Service names, job titles and the way services are organised can vary and may be updated by Barking and Dagenham Council or the NHS. Please check individual websites and organisations for the most up-to-date information.

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