Understanding SEND in Redbridge

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

Prepared by Sycamore Trust UK

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 Redbridge
- 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	Redbridge 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

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

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

C

CAMHS – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
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

CP – Child Protection
Processes put in place to keep children safe from harm.
Social care & safety

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

EPT – Empowering Parents Together
Redbridge's Parent Carer Forum, representing the voices of families of children and young people with SEND.
Services & roles

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

EYAS – Early Years Advisory Service
A service supporting children aged 0–5 with additional needs.
Services & roles

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

F

FiND – Families Information Direct
Redbridge's information and signposting service for families.
Services & roles

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

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. Some schools call this a SEN support plan or One Plan.

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

K

KS – Key Stage
A stage of education within the National Curriculum — for example, KS1 is Years 1–2, KS2 is Years 3–6, KS3 is Years 7–9 and KS4 is Years 10–11.

Education

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. You may also hear “child looked after” or “child in care”.

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

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

PRU – Pupil Referral Unit
A specialist educational setting for children who cannot attend mainstream school.
Education

PSHVS – Pre-School Home Visiting Service
A service that supports young children with additional needs and their families at home.
Services & roles

Q

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

R

REWT – Redbridge Educational Wellbeing Team
A service that supports emotional wellbeing and school engagement.
Services & roles

RIASS – Redbridge Information, Advice and Support Service
An independent service providing free information and advice about SEND.
Services & roles

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
A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability that calls for special educational provision.
Needs & conditions

SEN Support – Special Educational Needs Support
Additional support provided by schools to meet a child's needs without an EHCP.
Education

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

SENDATS – Special Educational Needs Advisory and Teaching Service
A specialist educational support service.
Services & roles

SENDCO – Special Educational Needs and Disability Coordinator
The person within a school 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. In Redbridge this is RIASS.
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 pupils' learning in and out of the classroom.

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 Redbridge services

What they do

These are some of the services you may hear about in Redbridge. You can find details and contact information for most of them on the **Redbridge Local Offer (FiND)**.

Family support

Early Help

A voluntary service that provides support to families before difficulties become more serious.

Family Help Service

Provides support and coordinates services for children and families with additional needs.

Targeted Support

Provides additional support to families experiencing emerging difficulties and aims to prevent problems from escalating.

Children's Centres and Family Hubs

Provide parenting support, activities and signposting.

Short Breaks Service

Provides respite opportunities and activities for disabled children and young people.

Youth Service

Provides activities, mentoring and support for young people.

Social care and safeguarding

MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub)

Screens referrals and decides what support or intervention may be required.

Children with Disabilities Team (CWDT)

Provides specialist social care support to disabled children and their families.

Education and wellbeing

Educational Psychology Service

Provides assessments and advice regarding learning, behaviour and emotional wellbeing.

SENDATS

Provides specialist educational advice and support to schools and families.

Educational Wellbeing Team (REWT)

Supports emotional wellbeing and school engagement.

Mental Health Support Team (MHST)

Provides early intervention support for anxiety and emotional wellbeing.

Health

Community Paediatrics

Provides developmental and neurodevelopmental assessments and diagnostic pathways.

School Nursing Service

Provides health advice, emotional wellbeing support and signposting for school-aged children and their families.

Information, advice and community

RIASS

Provides independent SEND information, advice and support.

FiND – Families Information Direct

Provides information and signposting to local services and activities.

Social Prescribing

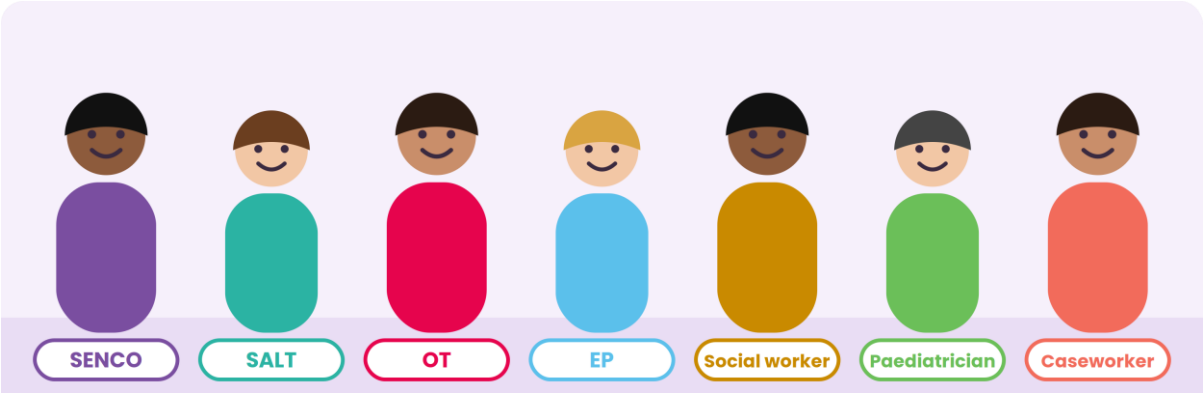
Connects families with community services and support.

Empowering Parents Together (EPT)

Redbridge's Parent Carer Forum — a way for families to have their say about local SEND services.

3 Professionals explained

Who's who in the SEND world



Job titles can vary between services, and not every family will meet every professional. If you are not sure who someone is or what they do, 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

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

EHCP Coordinator

Manages the Education, Health and Care Plan process.

School and education

SENCO

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.

Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

Works with schools and families where attendance is causing concern.

School Nurse

Supports children's health and emotional wellbeing.

Health and therapy

Community Paediatrician

Assesses and diagnoses neurodevelopmental conditions such as autism and ADHD.

Occupational Therapist (OT)

Supports sensory needs and daily living skills.

Speech and Language Therapist (SALT)

Supports speech, language and communication needs.

CAMHS Practitioner

Supports children experiencing mental health difficulties.

Social care and family support

Social Worker

Assesses needs and coordinates support for vulnerable children and families.

MASH Practitioner

Screens safeguarding concerns and coordinates appropriate support.

Family Support Practitioner

Provides practical support and signposting to families.

Social Prescriber

Connects families with community services and support.

Advice and parent voice

SENDIASS Adviser

Provides independent SEND information and advice.

Parent Carer Forum Coordinator

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

4 Useful websites and contacts

Where to find more help

In Redbridge

Organisation	How they can help	Website and contact
Redbridge Local Offer (FiND)	Local services, activities and SEND information for families.	find.redbridge.gov.uk
RIASS	Free, impartial SEND information, advice and support. 020 8708 8922.	redbridgeiass.org.uk
Empowering Parents Together (EPT)	Redbridge's Parent Carer Forum.	empoweringparentstogether.org.uk
Sycamore Trust UK	Support for autistic children, young people, adults and their families. 020 8517 9317.	Home - Sycamore Trust

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, EHC plans and appeals.	ipsea.org.uk
Contact	Advice and support for families with disabled children, including benefits.	contact.org.uk
Family Fund	Grants for families on low incomes raising disabled or seriously ill children.	familyfund.org.uk
Cerebra	Help for families of children with brain conditions, including guides and a sleep service.	cerebra.org.uk
KIDS	Services and support for disabled children, young people and their 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 information about benefits, including DLA, PIP and Universal Credit.	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
020 8517 9317	27–29 Woodward Road, Dagenham RM9 4SJ	Home - Sycamore Trust

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 RIASS, 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 Redbridge Council or the NHS. Please check individual websites and organisations for the most up-to-date information.

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