The Neurodivergent

Road Map

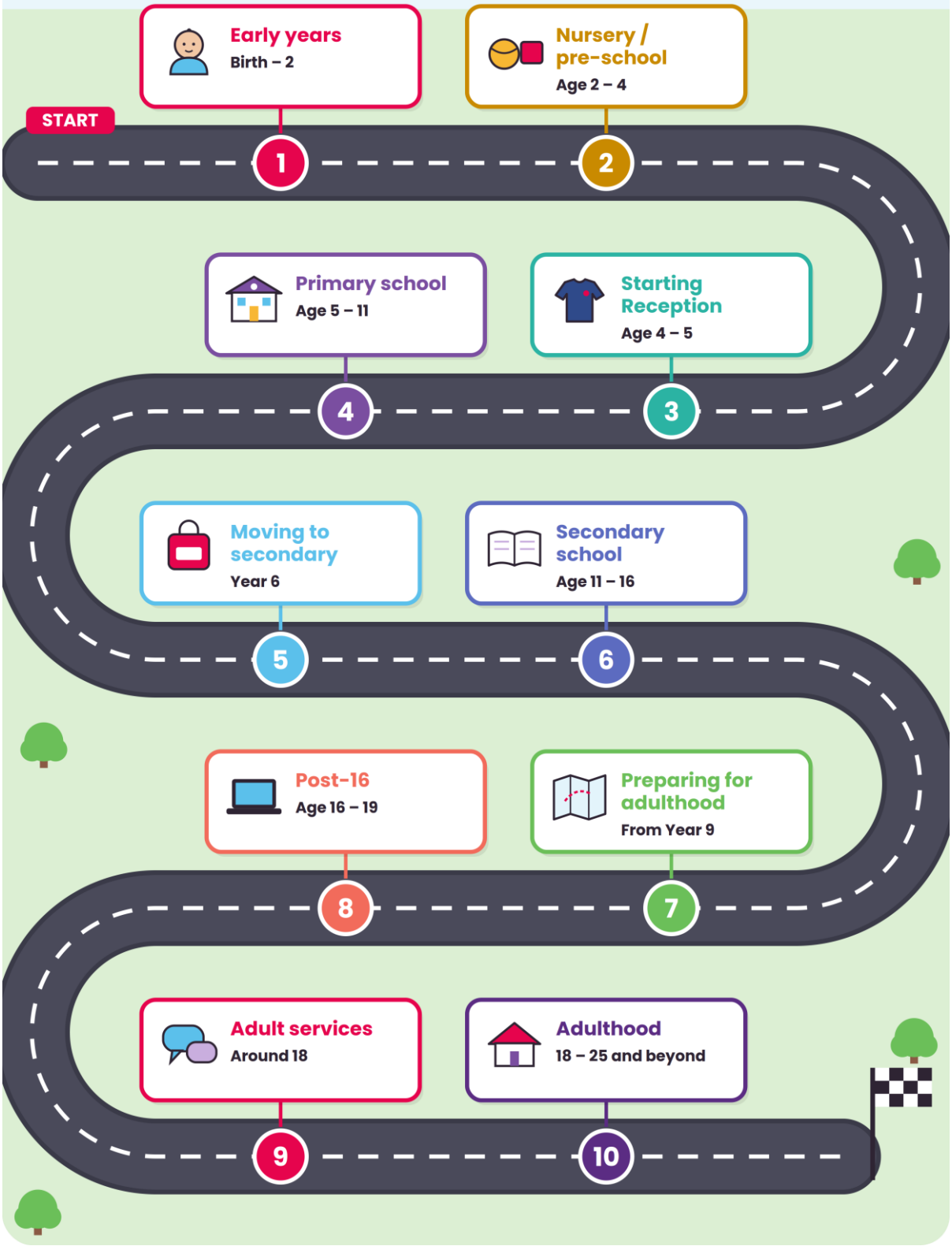
The journey from early years and nursery to adulthood — the main stops, support and key dates along the way

For families of neurodivergent children and young people in Barking & Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge

Plan ahead | **Know your rights** | **Find support**

The road from early years to adulthood

Every journey is different — this map shows the main stops and support along the way



How to use this road map

Every journey is different

This road map shows the **main stops** many neurodivergent children and young people pass on the way to adulthood, and the support available at each one. Some families join the road early; others start later, for example after a diagnosis at secondary school or as an adult. You can use the map at any point.

Remember

- Support should be based on **need** — a diagnosis is not needed to get SEN support in school or to ask for an EHC needs assessment
- Parents can ask the local authority for an EHC needs assessment at any age, from 0 to 25
- Start planning each move early — at least a year ahead

The child's voice

- Include the child or young person's views at every stage
- As they grow, their voice becomes more important
- From the end of the school year in which they turn 16, young people can make many decisions about their EHC plan themselves, with support if needed

The graduated approach: Assess, Plan, Do, Review

At every stage of education, settings should follow a cycle: **assess** the child's needs, **plan** support, **do** it, then **review** how well it worked. This is how SEN support works in nurseries, schools and colleges. If a child still struggles despite this support, an EHC needs assessment may be needed.

Stop by stop

What to expect along the road

1 Early years

Birth – 2

What happens

- Health visitor checks, including the 2-year review (at 2 to 2½)
- Parents may notice differences in communication, play, sleep or feeding

Support available

- Talk to your health visitor or GP if you are worried
- Referrals to speech and language therapy or a paediatrician
- Family Hubs, Early Help and early years home visiting (Portage)
- Disability Living Allowance (DLA) may be available

Key dates and tips

- You do not need to wait for a diagnosis to get help
- Keep notes, videos and a diary of what you notice

2 Nursery / pre-school

Age 2 – 4

What happens

- The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
- A progress check at age 2 in the setting
- Every setting has a SENCO

Support available

- SEN support using Assess, Plan, Do, Review
- Early years inclusion teams and area SENCOs
- Funded childcare hours, the Disability Access Fund and SEN inclusion funding
- An EHC needs assessment can be requested

Key dates and tips

- Check funded hours at Best Start in Life - Best Start in Life
- Use visual supports and a transition plan when starting

3 Starting Reception

Age 4 – 5

What happens

- Children usually start in the September after their 4th birthday
- School is compulsory from the term after a child's 5th birthday

Support available

- Transition visits, social stories and photo books
- Meetings between nursery, school and family
- Summer-born children may be able to start later or part-time — ask your local council

Key dates and tips

- Apply for a school place by **15 January**
- Offers on **16 April** (National Offer Day)
- With an EHC plan, the school must be named by **15 February**

4 Primary school

Age 5 – 11

What happens

- Key Stage 1 (Years 1–2) and Key Stage 2 (Years 3–6)
- Many children are identified or diagnosed during primary school

Support available

- SEN support from the class teacher and SENCO
- Specialist advice: educational psychology, SALT, OT, advisory teachers
- EHC needs assessment and EHC plan if needed
- Annual reviews of an EHC plan

Key dates and tips

- The council must decide within **6 weeks** whether to assess for an EHC Plan
- The whole EHC process should take no more than **20 weeks**
- SENDIASS can help for free

5 Moving to secondary school

Year 6

What happens

- Choosing and visiting secondary schools in Year 5 and Year 6
- Planning the move at the Year 5 or Year 6 annual review

Support available

- Extra transition visits and a transition plan
- Information shared between schools
- Travel training or travel assistance if eligible

Key dates and tips

- Apply for a place by **31 October** in Year 6
- Offers on **1 March**
- With an EHC plan, the school must be named by **15 February**

6 Secondary school

Age 11 – 16

What happens

- Key Stage 3 (Years 7–9) and Key Stage 4 (Years 10–11)
- Bigger buildings, timetables and lots of teachers
- GCSEs and other qualifications

Support available

- SENCO, learning support and quiet spaces
- Exam access arrangements, such as extra time or a separate room
- Support for anxiety and emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA)

Key dates and tips

- Agree reasonable adjustments, such as an exit pass
- Some young people are diagnosed in secondary school — support is still available

7 Preparing for adulthood

From Year 9 (age 13 – 14)

What happens

- From Year 9, every EHC plan annual review must include preparing for adulthood
- The focus is on four areas: work, independent living, friends and community, and good health

Support available

- Careers advice and work experience
- Free annual health checks with the GP for people aged 14+ with a learning disability
- Social care transition assessments if likely to need support at 18

Key dates and tips

- DLA ends at 16 — the young person will be invited to apply for PIP
- From the end of the school year in which they turn 16, young people can make many decisions about their EHC plan themselves

8 Post-16

Age 16 – 19

What happens

- In England, young people must stay in education or training until 18
- Options: sixth form, college, apprenticeships, supported internships, specialist colleges

Support available

- College learning support and SEN support
- EHC plans continue into further education if still needed
- Bursaries and post-16 travel support (check your council's policy)

Key dates and tips

- With an EHC plan, the post-16 placement must be named by **31 March**
- Visit colleges in Year 10 and Year 11

9 Moving to adult services

Around 18

What happens

- Children's services hand over to adult services: social care, mental health and health
- Paediatric care moves to the GP and adult teams

Support available

- Adult social care (Care Act) assessment
- Carer's assessment for parents and carers
- Adult autism and ADHD services
- Benefits such as PIP and Universal Credit

Key dates and tips

- At 18, parents do not automatically make decisions — the Mental Capacity Act applies
- Get advice early if a young person may need help with decisions

10 Adulthood

18 – 25 and beyond

What happens

- Further or higher education, training, work or volunteering
- Independent or supported living
- Friendships, community life and good health

Support available

- EHC plans can continue up to 25 if the young person is still in education or training and needs one
- Disabled Students' Allowance at university
- Access to Work and supported employment

Key dates and tips

- EHC plans do not continue at university
- Sycamore Trust supports autistic adults too

Key dates at a glance

Put these in your calendar

When	What	Key date
Age 2 – 2½	Health visitor 2-year review	Arranged by your health visiting team
Year before Reception	Apply for a primary school place	**15 January**; offers **16 April**
Year before Reception	EHC plan names the school (phase transfer)	**15 February**
Year 6	Apply for a secondary school place	**31 October**; offers **1 March**
Year 6	EHC plan names the secondary school	**15 February**
Year 9 onwards	Annual reviews include preparing for adulthood	Every annual review
Age 14+	Annual health check (learning disability)	Every year with the GP
Age 16	DLA ends; apply for PIP	Around the 16th birthday
Year 11	EHC plan names the post-16 placement	**31 March**
Age 18	Moving to adult services	Plan from age 14 – 17
Up to 25	EHC plan can continue if still needed in education	Reviewed every year

Dates are for England and may be the next working day if they fall on a weekend. EHC deadlines apply when a child is moving between phases of education.

Help along the road

Local and national support

Free SEND advice in your borough (SENDIASS)

Organisation	How they can help	Website and contact
Barking and Dagenham SENDIASS	Free, impartial SEND advice. 020 8593 4422.	carerscentre.org.uk/iassinfo
Havering SENDIASS	Free, impartial SEND advice. 01708 433885.	haveringsendiass.co.uk
Redbridge RIASS	Free, impartial SEND advice. 020 8708 8922.	redbridgeiass.org.uk

Local Offers

Organisation	How they can help	Website and contact
Barking and Dagenham Local Offer	Local SEND services and information.	localoffer.lbbd.gov.uk
Havering Family Services Hub	Local Offer and services for families.	familyserviceshub.havering.gov.uk
Redbridge Local Offer (FiND)	Local Offer and services for families.	find.redbridge.gov.uk

Adult Social Care

Organisation	How they can help	Website and contact
Barking and Dagenham	Advice, Support, Assessments	Adult social care | London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
Havering	Advice, Support, Assessments	Adult Social Care – London Borough of Havering
Redbridge	Advice, Support, Assessments	Adult care

National

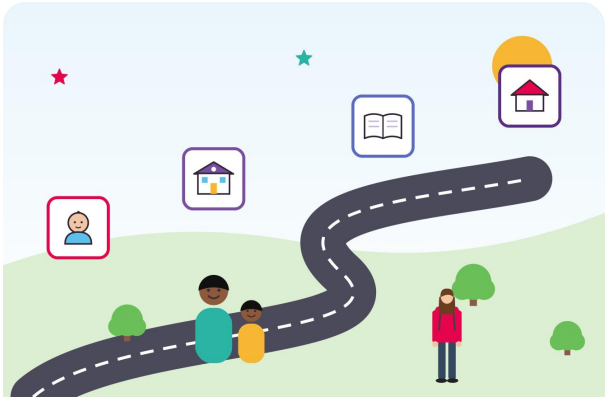
Organisation	How they can help	Website and contact
IPSEA	Free legal advice on EHC plans and SEND law.	ipsea.org.uk
Contact	Advice for families with disabled children, including benefits.	contact.org.uk
National Autistic Society	Information and support about autism.	autism.org.uk
Childcare Choices	Funded childcare hours.	childcarechoices.gov.uk
GOV.UK	PIP, Access to Work and Disabled Students' Allowance.	gov.uk/pip

Organisation	How they can help	Website and contact
Sycamore Trust UK	Support for autistic children, young people, adults and families. 020 8517 9317.	Home - Sycamore Trust

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 road map gives **general information only** about the education, health and social care system in England. It is not legal, medical or financial advice. Every child and young person's journey is different, and not every stop or service will apply to every family.

Dates, rules, benefits and services can change, and local arrangements vary between councils. Please check with your local authority, school, SENDIASS or IPSEA for advice about your own situation.

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