

Local Offers and Special Educational Needs (SEN)

A factsheet for parents/carers of deaf children and young people in England and their families

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This factsheet has been created to help you have a better understanding of Local Offers and how you can use them to improve services for your deaf child.

Local Offers are being introduced from 1 September 2014 as part of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) reforms. As they are new, there may be a period while local authorities get to grip with these changes. However, the Government has been clear that there should be no reduction in the support available to children because of these changes. NDCS will update this factsheet as our understanding and knowledge of the impact of Local Offers develops following their introduction.

Only local authorities in England will need to publish a Local Offer.

What is a Local Offer?

A Local Offer is the bringing together of information in one place about support from education, health and social care that a local authority expects to be available for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities in their area. On page 4 we give examples of what kind of information and support might be

[NDCS uses the word 'deaf' to refer to all levels of hearing loss](#)

included. The Local Offer must be published online from 1 September 2014 and many local authorities are creating new websites for their Local Offer. The image of the website on page 2 (Figure 1) is an example of what they might look like, but they won't all look the same.

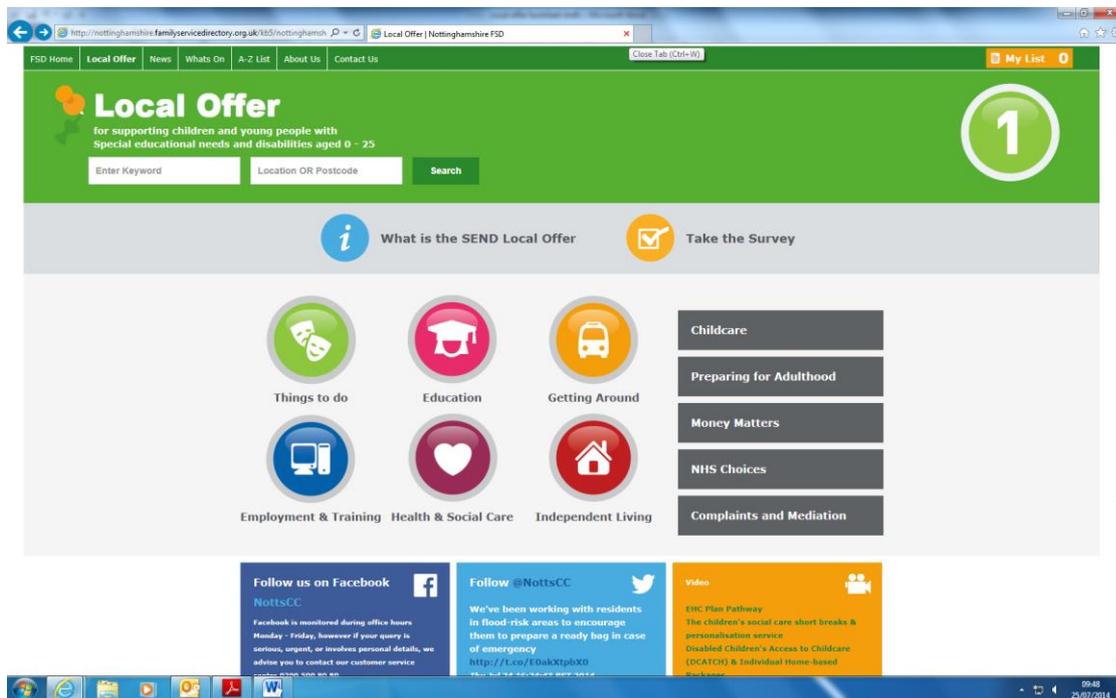


Figure 1 – An example of a local authority's Local Offer website

Why are Local Offers being introduced?

Local Offers are being introduced as part of a series of changes to the law around provision for children and young people with SEN and disabilities. The Government wants children, young people and their families to be more involved in decision-making about their support. Parents of deaf children have often struggled to find out what services are available to them in their area, relying on professionals to direct them.

Through Local Offers it is hoped that parents and young people will be better informed so that they can make decisions. For example, the Local Offer will hopefully provide you with answers to the following questions.

- Which school should my child go to?
- Where is the nearest audiology department?
- Is there any suitable childcare?
- Where can I learn BSL?
- Are there any parent support groups?

How is a Local Offer developed?

Figure 3 shows the way Local Offers should be developed by local authorities. They must involve parents and young people in the development of a Local Offer by, for example, asking for views on what should go in the Local Offer and how information

should be presented. Parents and young people should also be asked for their views about the quality of support available in their area to see if the Local Offer needs to be improved. Local authorities are expected to ensure that children and young people with different types of disability and SEN are represented in their consultations.

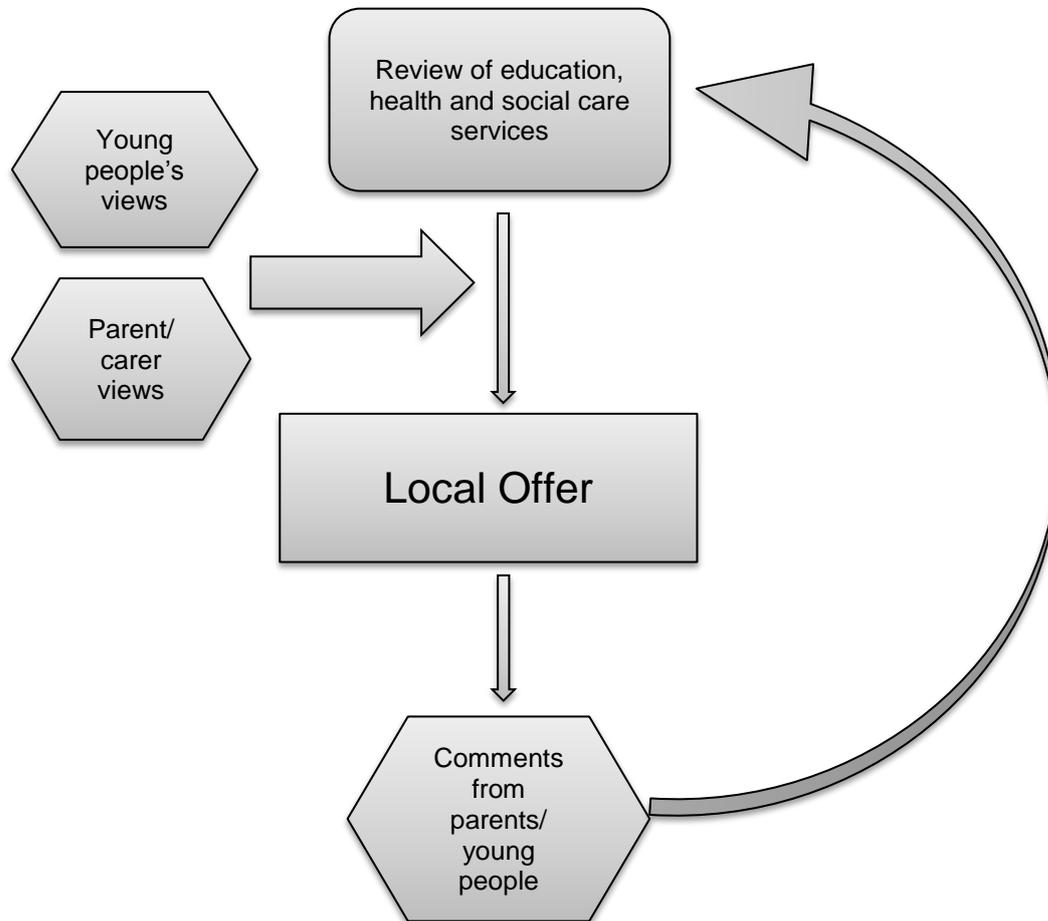


Figure 3 – How Local Offers should be developed

What information must be included in a Local Offer?

There are lots of things that local authorities have to include in their Local Offer. The table below summarises some of the information that must be included within a Local Offer by law. Chapter four of the SEND Code of Practice provides more detail on what should be included within a Local Offer. This is available online at www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25.

The second column of the table below gives examples of information about services for deaf children that you could look out for. However, it is likely that local authorities will vary on the extent to which they include detailed information about services for deaf children. Therefore, the examples below in the second column are not exhaustive or comprehensive, but should give you an understanding of what could be included.

Information that must be included by law	Examples of information that could be provided in relation to services for deaf children
Specialist education provision in the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local resource bases Peripatetic Teachers of the Deaf Speech and language therapy
Specialist education provision outside of the area and used by local children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools for deaf children, including details of communication approach Nearby resource bases for deaf children
Childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nurseries with SEND support Specialist childminders
Health care provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audiology services Mental health services
Social care provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short break arrangements Social care Personal Budget arrangements Technology assessment and provision
Adaptations to teaching and learning environment for children with SEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliant with acoustics regulations Curriculum adaptations (for teaching of phonics, literacy, etc.)
Expertise amongst teachers and other education professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher of the Deaf and communication support worker qualifications
Arrangements for travel to and from schools, post-16 and early years providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxi services
Arrangements for apprenticeships and training and preparing for adulthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialist apprenticeship schemes Communication support available
Leisure activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deaf youth groups
Sources of support and advice about SEN and disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NDCS local group Brokerage agencies
Support available to young people in higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disabled Student Allowance

Other information that must be included is:

- arrangements for identifying and assessing SEN
- how you can request an Education Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment
- your rights to appeal a decision made by the local authority linked to SEN and disability
- any eligibility criteria for any provision set out in the Local Offer.

The law says Local Offers must be **accessible** to parents and young people and those with different types of SEN and disability. For some people this may mean making information accessible through British Sign Language or other languages. Information should also be free of jargon.

NDCS's advice to local authorities on the Local Offer details the specific information about services for deaf children that we hope local authorities will include in their Local Offer. A link to this resource is provided at the end of this factsheet.

Information schools must publish

Schools are required to publish their own information within what is sometimes called a 'School Offer'. These must be linked to within Local Offers and should provide you with:

- an SEN information report – this is detailed information about the school's arrangements for identifying, assessing and making provision for pupils with SEN
- the school's arrangements for the admission of disabled children
- the steps taken to ensure disabled children are not treated less favourably compared to other non-disabled children
- the school's accessibility plan.

How do I find my Local Offer?

It will be on, or linked to, the website of your local authority. If you type in the name of your local authority and the words 'Local Offer' within a search engine it will usually find the website.

If you do not have access to the internet you can ask your local authority how you can access your Local Offer. You can get in touch with them by contacting your town hall, asking at your local school or library or looking for a phone number for the local authority on any letters you've received from them. Your local authority has to make alternative arrangements for publishing information for those without internet access.

What if I use services from two or more local authorities?

Look at the Local Offer for the local authority your home address falls under. You should not have to look at more than one Local Offer because local authorities should tell you about services you can access outside of the boundaries of your local authority. However, you may find another local authority's Local Offer to be a useful source of information, for example to compare whether other local authorities have better 'offers' than those in your area. This can help you identify if your local authority needs to improve.

Is your Local Offer fit for purpose?

We mentioned earlier that local authorities are likely to vary on the extent to which they include detailed information about services for deaf children. The checklist below gives you some things to think about when reviewing your Local Offer and checking if it is fit for purpose.

- Is it easy to find?
- Can you find the information relevant to you?
- Is the information easy to understand?
- Is the information useful?

- Are there any services missing?
- Is the information detailed enough?
- Is the information up to date?

If the answer to any of the questions above is 'no', then you may want to think about getting involved in trying to improve your Local Offer – see below.

Local Offers are also supposed to be accessible to young people (up to the age of 25) to find out for themselves what support is available in their area. For example, there must be information about the support available in higher education or about apprenticeships. If your child is in their teens or early twenties, ask them what they thought of the Local Offer and whether they found it helpful.

Getting involved in shaping/improving your Local Offer

It is unlikely that Local Offers will be a finished product on the date they are launched. In some areas it may take years before they are fully developed and even then they will need updating and reviewing to make sure they stay relevant to the needs of children and young people. The Department for Education has said that local authorities must involve children, young people and their families in developing and improving the Local Offer.

For Local Offers to be responsive to the needs of deaf children and young people it is important that parents and young people get involved in their development. There are a number of ways in which you can influence your Local Offer.

- **Join a parent/carers forum**
Most local authorities will have a group that contributes to local consultations on services for children with SEN and disabilities. To find your local parent/carers forum visit the National Network of Parent Carers Forums (NNPCF) website www.nnpcf.org.uk.
- **Discuss it at your local CHSWG**
Children's Hearing Services Working Groups (CHSWGs) are forums where parents and professionals discuss local services for deaf children together. For more information on CHWSGs visit www.ndcs.org.uk/family_support/useful_links_and_organisations/glossary/chswg.html.
- **Discuss it with your NDCS local group**
NDCS's local groups often try to influence local services. Contact your local group and find out if they are discussing the Local Offer. For a list of local groups visit www.ndcs.org.uk/localgroups or contact the NDCS Freephone Helpline on [0808 800 8880](tel:08088008880).
- **Encourage your child to get involved**
Your child may have the opportunity to join a young person's forum or consultation. The website detailing your Local Offer should explain how they can do this.

- **Submit comments to the local authority**

Local authorities must allow people to submit comments or complaints about their Local Offers. We expect most of them will allow people to do this online. If not, contact your local authority to ask them how best to leave comments. Their contact details will be shown in the Local Offer itself.

Every year at least, local authorities are required to publish any comments received by children, young people and their parents or those representing them. Local authorities must also respond to comments, stating what action they are going to take and publish their responses. If they receive several similar comments on the same issue they may decide to respond to them collectively. All comments must be published anonymously.

Each local authority will decide how they receive comments and publish them – the Local Offer itself should explain the process.

I'm still not happy with my Local Offer. What can I do?

If you are unhappy with the local authority's response to your feedback on the Local Offer or if the Local Offer in your area is poor, you can take the following action.

- Make a formal complaint to the local authority. The local authority's website should explain how to do this.
- Contact NDCS's Freephone Helpline by calling 0808 800 8880, by emailing helpline@ndcs.org.uk, or using Live Chat www.ndcs.org.uk/livechat. We will be raising issues brought to our attention with local authorities.
- Write to your councillor. You can use the Write to Them website (www.writetothem.org.uk) to find out who your local councillor is.
- Write to your MP and [ask them to raise the issue with the local authority and with the Secretary of State for Education](#). You can use the Write to Them website (www.writetothem.org.uk) to find out who your local MP is.
- Ask the Local Government's Ombudsman (LGO) to consider if the local authority has followed the law. You can usually only complain to the LGO once you have complained to the local authority. The LGO's website explains how to do this: www.lgo.org.uk.
- As a last resort, if the local authority has failed to meet their legal requirements, then you could consider initiating legal action against them. The grounds on which you may be able to take legal action may be limited. Contact our Freephone Helpline for further information and advice on this option.

I-Sign

NDCS manages I-Sign, a project which aims to improve access to British Sign Language (BSL) learning and provision through the SEND reforms. The project aims for parents to be better informed about the options and support available to them to learn BSL through the development of Local Offers. To find out more visit www.i-sign.org.uk.

Information resources

Children and Families Act 2014

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted

NDCS: Guidance for local authorities on developing their Local Offer

www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/news/develop_local_offer.html

The Department for Education: *Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice* (chapter 4 provides more information on the Local Offer)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25

The Department for Education: A parent/carer guide to the above Code of Practice

www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-guide-for-parents-and-carers

The Department for Education: Information for young people about SEN reform

www.gov.uk/government/publications/sen-and-disability-support-changes-information-for-young-people

NDCS: *Special Educational Needs (SEN) Reforms Frequently Asked Questions*

www.ndcs.org.uk/sen

National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF)

www.nnpf.org.uk

[Information from NDCS about other elements of SEND reform, including Education, Health and Care plans \(EHC plans\) and Personal Budgets, can be viewed on our website at \[www.ndcs.org.uk/sen\]\(http://www.ndcs.org.uk/sen\).](#)

More information

For more information take a look at our website www.ndcs.org.uk

For information and practical support on issues related to your child's deafness, contact the National Deaf Children's Society's Freephone Helpline on 0808 800 8880, email us at helpline@ndcs.org.uk or contact us via Live Chat at www.ndcs.org.uk/livechat.

If you prefer to speak a language other than English, tell us the language of your choice and your phone number (in English). We will call you back with an interpreter within a few minutes.

Glossary

Disability the legal definition is when a person has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Long-term means lasting, or likely to last, at least 12 months.

Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment an assessment of a child's/young person's education, health and care needs, carried out by the local authority in consultation with relevant professionals such as Teachers of the Deaf, educational psychologists and speech and language therapists. Local authorities must consult the child/young person and parents throughout the process.

Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC plan) an EHC plan sets out a child's/young person's education, health and social care needs, the desired outcomes which parents, professionals and, wherever possible, the child or young person have identified, and the support which is to be provided to help the child or young person achieve the desired outcomes. It is drawn up by the local authority after an EHC needs assessment has determined that an EHC plan is necessary.

Local Offer Local authorities have to set out in their Local Offer information about provision they expect to be available across education, health and social care for children and young people in their area who have SEN or are disabled, including those who do not have EHC plans.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) a child or young person has SEN if their learning difficulty or disability calls for special educational provision, that is provision which is different from or additional to the provision normally made for other pupils of the same age. You may also see the acronym SEND used – this is intended to include children who have both special educational needs and a disability.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice is guidance on how children with special educational needs and disabilities should be supported. By law, it must be followed by local authorities, schools and a wide range of other bodies unless there are good reasons why not. The guidance has legal effect through the Children and Families Act 2014 (part three).

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