

# Early Support

for children, young people and families

## Information about the people you may meet



## About this resource

The people and services you and your family work with over time will vary according to where you live and the specific nature of your child's or young person's additional needs. Job titles can be confusing if you're not familiar with them, particularly if you're meeting a lot of new people from different services at the same time.

This information resource explains in simple terms what different people with professional job titles may do. Although this might look daunting don't worry, you will probably come into contact with only a few of the people listed.

The explanations given here are intended to provide a basic introduction only. If you'd like to find out more, it tells you where to look at the back of the booklet.

The guide was developed by Early Support and the Daycare Trust.

### Early Support

Early Support is a way of working, underpinned by 10 principles that aim to improve the delivery of services for disabled children, young people and their families. It enables services to coordinate their activity better and provide families with a single point of contact and continuity through key working.

Early Support is a core partner supporting the implementation of the strategy detailed in Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability, the Government's 2011 Green Paper. This identified Early Support as a key approach to meeting the needs of disabled children, young people and their families.

Early Support helps local areas implement the Government's strategy to bring together the services families need into a single assessment and planning process covering education, health and care. Early Support provides a wide range of resources and training to support children, young people, families and service deliverers.

To find out more about [Early Support](http://www.ncb.org.uk/earllysupport), please visit [www.ncb.org.uk/earllysupport](http://www.ncb.org.uk/earllysupport).

### Explanation of the term parent carer

Throughout this booklet the term 'parent carer' is used. This means any person with parental responsibility for a child or young person with special educational needs or disability. It is intended as an inclusive term that can cover foster carers, adoptive parents and other family members.

# The people you may meet

## Early years and school years

**Advisory teacher** - A teacher, usually with additional training in a particular specialism, who advises schools and families on educational approaches. Some advisory teachers visit families with young children in their homes.

**Area special educational needs coordinator (SENCO)** - Usually a person employed by the local authority to support SENCOs based in early years settings to identify children with special educational needs and make sure they receive appropriate support. They may also offer training support and links to other services in the area.

**Audiologist** - A practitioner who carries out hearing tests and explains the results of those tests. If your child needs hearing aids the audiologist will identify the best type and arrange for you to get them. They also monitor your child's hearing to make sure that any hearing aids supplied are appropriate. An audiologist usually refers you to a doctor who works with deaf children. Depending on where you live, this doctor can be called an audiological physician, a community paediatrician in audiology, or an ear, nose and throat (ENT) consultant. See the 'ENT consultant' entry for more information.

**Benefits advisor** - A benefit or welfare rights advisor works in Welfare Rights units, Citizens Advice Bureaus and independent advice centres. They can help you claim Disability Living Allowance (DLA) ([www.gov.uk/dla-disability-living-allowance-benefit/overview](http://www.gov.uk/dla-disability-living-allowance-benefit/overview)) and other benefits to which you may be entitled. You can find out whether there's one in your area by asking at your local town hall, looking on the local authority website, searching on the internet or looking in the phone book.

**Care co-ordinator** - Some services refer to the named person chosen to support you and your child as the key worker, link worker or care coordinator. This person is a source of support – they will maintain regular contact with your family and take responsibility for checking that you have all the information you need, that services are well coordinated and that information about your child is shared efficiently with everyone who is working with your family. Key worker services are not available in all areas.

**Childcare broker** - A person who can offer support to parent carers who are experiencing difficulty in finding suitable childcare for children with additional needs. They can provide advice and assistance to parent carers who use, or want to use, childcare in their local area. This is a free service offered to meet the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006, which requires all local authorities to provide advice and assistance to parent carers or prospective parent carers who use or propose to use childcare in the area of the local authority. You should speak to your Family Information Service (FIS) about childcare brokers. Find your local FIS at: [www.daycaretrust.org.uk/findyourfis](http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/findyourfis).

**Childminder** - Someone who offers full-time and part-time care, play and learning opportunities for children, usually in the childminder's own home. They are self-employed and may be flexible in the hours they work, offering early mornings, evenings and weekend care.

**Clinical psychologist** - A psychologist who helps people with a range of difficulties. These can include helping children with specific impairments or challenges with learning, or to overcome behavioural difficulties.

**Communication support worker (CSW)** - A learning support or teaching assistant who works in early years settings alongside teachers and others to provide sign language support for young deaf children or children with hearing impairments.

**Deaf adult/deaf role model** - If you have a deaf child, deaf adults can provide valuable insights into the experience of growing up deaf and be a positive role model for your child. In some areas, deaf adults are employed to come into your home to offer support with communication and answer some of your questions about deafness. These services are sometimes provided by social services, or through the hearing impaired service. In some places, the service is funded by voluntary organisations. Deaf adults might also be employed by a school, nursery or local authority.

**Dietician** - A health practitioner who gives advice about nutrition and swallowing or eating difficulties. Sometimes children need nasogastric or gastrostomy feeding to receive the nutrition they need. This means liquid feed is given through a tube that is inserted directly through the abdominal wall or through a narrow tube that is passed through the nose, down the food pipe and into the stomach.

A dietician makes a full nutritional assessment before feeding begins in this way. They can advise you, the hospital and community health staff about the feed type, the amount, the method of administration, the feeding regime and any equipment required for your child. Dieticians are often responsible for ordering supplies and equipment, and will make sure you have a regular supply of the things you need to feed your child.

**Disabled Children's Access to Childcare (DCATCH) information officer** - A person who is part of a statutory service to provide information and advice to parent carers of children and young people up to the age of 20, or 25 if a young person has additional needs. Some services have a designated person who coordinates information and they may be referred to as the **Family Information Service (FIS) Officer**.

**Duty worker/duty social worker/duty officer** - The person who answers the phone and takes details when you call to make contact with social services. Most teams of social workers operate a duty system, which means that each team member is responsible in turn for answering the phones, making home visits and dealing with families who do not yet have an allocated or named social worker.

**Ear, nose and throat (ENT) consultant** - A doctor who specialises in the diagnosis and treatment of ear, nose and throat conditions. When a hearing loss has been identified, they can help in trying to discover the cause of deafness. They also offer advice and treatment when older children develop glue ear (also known as Otitis Media).

**Early years professional (EYP)** - This is a lead practitioner in early years settings who supports staff to plan for, meet, assess and review each child's learning, care and development through play.

**Educational audiologist** - A qualified teacher of the deaf, who has an additional recognised qualification in audiology, including hearing assessment. They give guidance to other teachers of the deaf, parents of deaf children and other practitioners about hearing assessments, hearing aids and hearing support.

**Educational psychologist (EP)** - Someone who tackles the problems encountered by children and young people in education, which may involve learning difficulties/impairments and social or emotional problems. They carry out a wide range of tasks with the aim of enhancing children's learning and enabling teachers to become more aware of the social factors affecting teaching and learning.

**Education welfare officer (EWO)** - A person who works with young people who have difficulties with attending school. Poor attendance at school can be caused by many different reasons. Examples can include: family issues of concern; health difficulties; bullying and/or discrimination; and struggling to cope with school work.

**Equality named coordinator (ENCO)** - A staff member working in an early years setting, childcare provision or school who supports the setting to give due regard to the equality needs of children, young people and families, and assists the setting to comply with equality legislation and best practice. In regard to disability equality they work with their setting SENCO and are supported in many settings and local authorities by Early Years Equality.

**Family information service (FIS) officer** - See **Disabled Children's Access to Childcare (DCATCH) information officer** for more details.

**Family support worker** - Someone who works for a statutory, voluntary, cooperative or private provider of short breaks or home-based support. They may have a variety of professional skills and backgrounds. Their role can vary from provider to provider.

**General practitioner (GP)** - A family doctor who works in the community. They are a first point of contact for many families. They deal with your child or young person's general health and can refer you on to clinics, hospitals and specialists when needed. They may also support welfare benefit applications and/or other types of help.

**Health visitor** - A qualified nurse or midwife with additional specialist training and experience in child health. They visit family homes in the early years to check on children's health and development. They give help, advice and practical assistance to families about the care of very young children, normal child development, sleep patterns, feeding, behaviour and safety. You should automatically receive a visit from a health visitor as all families are visited in the early years. (If you have not had a visit, contact your local health visitor through your GP.) Health visitors can help you contact doctors, hospitals and other services in your area. Some areas have specialist health visitors who have particular experience and expertise supporting families with very young children with an identified condition or additional need or who need extra help.

**Independent parental supporter (IPS)** - Someone trained by the Parent Partnership Service to support parents and help them understand special educational needs and the SEN Code of Practice. Your local Parent Partnership Service should be able to put you in touch with an IPS if your local authority is considering issuing a statement of special educational needs. They help by providing information and sometimes by coming with you to meetings.

**Inclusion coordinator** - Some local authorities, early years settings and schools have a person who is responsible for coordinating the support needed for all children and young people to be included in that particular setting.

**Intervener** - A specialist learning support assistant who works one-to-one with a child or young person with multi-sensory impairment, providing information that would normally come through sight or hearing. They help children and young people to understand and communicate, and access the environment.

**Key person** - This is a named early years practitioner who will have the responsibility of building a relationship with you and your child, and communicating and celebrating your child's development and progress with you on a regular basis. They will also be responsible for working with others involved with your child to complete the recently introduced two-year-old check.

**Key worker** - See **care co-ordinator** for further details.

**Key working** - This is an approach that builds on partnership working with the child or young person with additional needs and their family. Early Support identifies four functions of key working. These are:

- providing information and signposting to organisations who can provide further help and advice
- coordinating services and practitioners around the child, young person and family
- providing emotional and practical support as part of a trusting relationship
- supporting and facilitating a single planning and joint assessment process

The **key working functions** can be carried out by a wide range of practitioners from all agencies, the voluntary sector, by parent carers and by young people themselves. This means it is a way of working rather than an additional service. Key working is being widely developed through Early Support.

**Lead professional** - In most children's services, this is the person who will be appointed as the main contact for everyone involved in supporting a child or young person and their family.

**Learning disability nurse** - This is a specialist nurse who works with children, young people and adults with additional needs and their families. They can help you find services for your child and also support for you as a parent carer.

**Learning mentor** - This person provides additional support to children and young people, either individually or in groups. They also support their families and help them to overcome barriers to learning. They work in schools or other organisations that work with young people.

**Learning support assistant** - Someone who works alongside teachers in early years settings to help and support individual children or small groups to learn effectively, participate and fulfil their potential.

**Link worker** - See **care co-ordinator** for further details.

**Midwife** - A health practitioner who holds a qualification in midwifery and supports expectant mothers during pregnancy, throughout labour and in the postnatal period. They help parents make informed choices about services and options by providing as much information as possible about the care that is available.

**Mobility teacher/officer** - Someone trained in teaching mobility skills to people with severe visual impairments (not necessarily to children or those with additional needs). They encourage children and young people with a visual impairment to move around more independently.

**Music therapist** - A therapist who helps children and young people to learn and express themselves through music.

**Named officer** - This your family's contact person at the local authority if the local authority is considering issuing a statement of special educational needs. They deal with your child's statutory assessment and draw up the statement.

**Nursery nurse** - Someone trained in, and able to support, the early stages of child development. They usually work in nurseries and schools. They are not medical nurses.

**Occupational therapist (OT)** - Someone who helps children and young people improve their developmental function by therapeutic techniques, environmental adaptations and the use of specialist equipment. OTs are concerned with the difficulties that children and young people have in carrying out everyday activities. These could include sitting in a chair, holding a spoon and fork, or drinking from a cup. They can also advise on how you, as a parent, can carry your child up and down stairs safely. OTs work for both the health service and social services. Paediatric OTs working for the health service, assess children for things like specialist chairs or cups. Social services OTs pay for the equipment. You may also come across health service OTs once your child starts nursery or school.

**Ophthalmic optician** - A health practitioner who specialises in measuring children's and young people's sight, and prescribing glasses. They can identify eye diseases and are usually based at a hospital or opticians, although young children with multi-sensory impairment are more likely to be assessed at a specialist clinic. The dispensing optician will help you choose frames and make sure they fit properly but cannot test your child's sight or prescribe glasses.

**Ophthalmologist** - A doctor who is based in a hospital and specialises in the diagnosis and treatment of eye defects and diseases. They have special qualifications and experience in eye disorders and in treating them with appropriate medicine and surgery. You may be referred to one to check that your child's eyes are healthy.

**Optician** - Someone trained to dispense and adjust spectacles and other optical aids.

**Optometrist** - See **ophthalmic optician** for more details.

**Orthoptist** - A health practitioner who specialises in correcting vision by non-surgical means (especially by exercises to strengthen the eye muscles). They often work with ophthalmologists in hospitals, but may also work in a health clinic or visit a school. They can test children's sight, look at eye movements, assess how well both eyes work together and check for squints (also known as turning eyes).

**Orthotist** - Someone who measures, designs, makes, fits, or services braces, splints and special footwear to help children and young people with movement difficulties and to relieve discomfort.

**Paediatrician** - A doctor who specialises in working with babies and children. They are often the first point of contact for families who find out their child has an additional need very early on in hospital and can offer advice, information and support about any medical condition(s) a child has. Paediatricians sometimes work in hospitals and sometimes within community health. It's usually a paediatrician who refers your child on to any other specialists that they need to see.

**Paediatric neurologist** - A doctor who specialises in how the brain works in very young children.

**Parent Partnership Service** - This service offers information, advice and support for parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs (SEN). You can find out about your local Parent Partnership Service by visiting: [www.parentpartnership.org.uk](http://www.parentpartnership.org.uk).

**Parent support advisor (PSA)** - These advisors work in partnership with families, carers and pupils in a school context to enable pupils to have full access to educational opportunities and overcome barriers to learning and participation.

**Peripatetic teacher** - An advisory teacher, usually employed by a local authority, who is not based in one place but travels around to work with children and schools and with families in their homes in the early years of childhood.

**Physiotherapist** - A health practitioner specialising in physical and motor development. They are concerned with maximising children's and young people's potential. This means they will assess your child and develop a plan to assist with their physical movements. Physiotherapists can also teach you techniques to help with eating, bathing and dressing, and advise on equipment that might help your child's mobility. A physiotherapist may see your child at home or in other settings, such as a nursery placement or Child Development Centre (CDC). They work closely with families, other healthcare professionals and anyone else involved in caring for children. Some families meet a physiotherapist for the first time very early on, when their child is in a Special Care Baby Unit or on a hospital ward.

**Portage home visitor/portage worker** - Someone who has received training from the National Portage Association to work with you and your child. Portage home visitors come from a wide range of professional backgrounds and may be teachers, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, nursery nurses, health visitors, social workers, parents, or volunteers with relevant experience.

**Pupil and family worker** - Someone who provides behaviour and welfare support to enable children and young people to overcome barriers to learning and to achieve their full potential.

**Qualified teachers of visually impaired children (QTVI)** - A teacher who has received specialist training and holds an additional qualification to work with children with visual impairments. They support children and their families, and other teachers. Some teachers of children with visual impairments are based in schools, others are known as visiting or peripatetic teachers. In the preschool years, they visit and support families and children in their homes. Ask your local authority to put you in contact with a QTVI.

**School nurse** - A medical nurse trained as a public health practitioner, whose job is to work with school aged children (in and out of school buildings). The school nurse's role includes supporting children with their medical needs as well as improving their health through education and promoting healthy lifestyles.

**Social worker** - A practitioner, normally employed by a local authority, who supports children, young people and families by advising on appropriate services and introducing families to some of the services they might need. They can provide practical help and advice about anything from counselling, transport and home help, to family sign language classes, parent groups and play schemes. They may also be able to help you with claiming welfare benefits or obtaining equipment you need at home. In some areas, social care services have specialist social workers who have particular knowledge and experience of working with children and young people who have learning needs, or blind or deaf children and young people. Sometimes they work within teams supporting a range of children with additional needs.

**Special educational needs coordinator (SENCO)** - A SENCO has responsibility for identifying children with special educational needs and making sure they receive appropriate support. This may involve working directly with the child or young person, supporting mainstream staff in assessing a child's needs or a combination of both of these. SENCOs also work with external support services.

**Specialist health visitor** - A health visitor who has additional training and experience of working with young children with medical problems or additional needs. They can act as a bridge between hospital and community health services in the early years of childhood.

**Speech and language therapist** - A specialist in speech, language and communication problems. They assess, diagnose and develop programmes of care to help children and young people improve communication skills. They offer support and advice to parents and other professionals about developing communication that may be verbal (i.e. using speech) or non-verbal, using signs, symbols or communication aids. There are many causes of speech and language difficulties. Some therapists specialise in eating or swallowing disorders. Others specialise in working with specific groups of children, for example, deaf children, or children with cleft lip and palate. They work as members of teams in many different settings, including health clinics, hospitals, nurseries, Children's Centres and schools. They work closely with families, medical and health staff, teachers and social workers, depending on the child's needs and circumstances.

**Teaching assistant** - See **Learning support assistant** for more details.

**Teachers of children with multi-sensory impairments** - A teacher who has received specialist training and holds an additional qualification to work with children with multi-sensory impairments. They support children and their families, and other teachers. Some teachers of children with multi-sensory impairments are based in schools, others are known as visiting or peripatetic teachers. In the preschool years, they visit and support families and children in their homes.

**Teachers of children with visual impairments** - See **qualified teachers of visually impaired children (QTVI)** for further details.

**Teacher of the deaf (ToD)/Teacher of the hearing impaired** - A teacher who has received specialist training and holds an additional qualification to work with deaf children. They support deaf children and their families, and other practitioners who are involved with a child's education. Some are based in schools, others are known as visiting or peripatetic teachers of the deaf. Peripatetic teachers travel to the family home and to playgroups, nurseries, schools and colleges. Some teachers of the deaf have additional training to work with very young children. These are sometimes known as preschool or early years teachers of the deaf.

**Visiting teacher** - See **peripatetic teacher** for further details.

**Welfare rights advisor** - See **benefits advisor** for further details.

## Into adulthood

You may come across a number of the roles mentioned in the [Early Years](#) and [School Years](#) section of this resource, however this section describes people who are available to support adults specifically.

**Adult community nurse** - A nurse who provides care for adults with long-term health conditions in their own home. They may be linked to your local GP surgery, health centre or hospital.

**Adult learning disability nurse** - This health practitioner works in partnership with family carers to provide specialist healthcare. Their main aim is to support the well-being and social inclusion of people with additional needs by improving or maintaining their physical and mental health, by reducing barriers and supporting the person to pursue a fulfilling life. Learning disability nursing is provided in settings such as adult education, residential and community centres, as well as at home, workplaces and schools.

**Adult special needs dentist** - Many dentists will happily treat people with additional needs in their surgery. However, some people experience problems with finding a dentist who can help them. If you have additional needs (for example, physical and/or learning disabilities, severe medical problems, or agoraphobia if you are house-bound) you may want to check out the Community Dental Service (CDS)/Salaried Primary Care Dental Service. Many areas will also see those who suffer from dental phobia. Available services do vary from area to area. In some areas you may contact the CDS directly, but more commonly you will need a referral from your GP or another dentist.

This service is provided by Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in England, Local Health Boards in Wales and Health Boards in Scotland and Northern Ireland. It employs staff to provide dental care for adults and children unable to obtain it from a high street family dental practice. The service is often located in community health centres and, occasionally, some hospitals.

**Connexions personal adviser** - A fully qualified person who can offer practical support and advice about important life choices. This may be education, training, employment or lifestyle choices. They are able to help with a wide range of issues that can affect young people and which may stop them achieving their potential.

**Employment support team** - In some local authorities there are specially trained advisers who can provide information and support about employment. These services may also be run by a voluntary organisation on behalf of the local authority and may be located within Jobcentre Plus offices.

**Personal assistant** - An individual who is specifically employed to enable a young person to live life to the full, offering flexible and reliable support wherever or whenever it is required and agreed by the young person themselves. Personal assistants can be

employed directly through a personal budget or can be part of a service with a team of personal assistants.

**Support broker** - Someone who will support you to plan, find the support you need and, if required, help you manage the plan in the longer term. Support brokers may be funded by the Children's Service or may be funded by using your child's personal budget.

**Transition officer** - Some local authorities have a person who is responsible for helping to coordinate transitions your child or young person may go through. For example, this could be a transition from school to college, or college to employment. Officers can be involved in facilitating person-centred reviews and plans.

## How to find out more

The definitions of practitioners listed in this booklet provide a starting point to help you in the early days, when you may be meeting a lot of new people with different professional titles. If you would like to know more, ask the people you see on a regular basis to explain what they do and tell you a bit about their training.

For more detail about the training these practitioners have and the kinds of work they do, visit the websites for the professional associations that the people working with you may belong to. These are often good places to start looking for more information.

### Useful websites include:

Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS)

[www.adcs.org.uk](http://www.adcs.org.uk)

Association of Educational Psychologists

[www.aep.org.uk](http://www.aep.org.uk)

British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD)

[www.batod.org.uk](http://www.batod.org.uk)

British Psychological Society

[www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk)

Council for Disabled Children: Personalisation Resources

[www.ncb.org.uk/cdc/wider\\_projects/personalisation.aspx](http://www.ncb.org.uk/cdc/wider_projects/personalisation.aspx)

Early Years Equality

[www.earlyyearesequality.org.uk](http://www.earlyyearesequality.org.uk)

### Getting a life

The Getting a Life programme ran from April 2008 to the end of March 2011. It was set up to show what needs to happen to enable young people with a severe learning disability to achieve paid employment and full lives when they leave education.

The central programme team has now disbanded, but the people who have been involved in the local projects are continuing their work to improve employment opportunities for young people with learning disabilities in each area.

[www.gettingalife.org.uk](http://www.gettingalife.org.uk)

### KIDS

The organisation KIDS has a booklet called, *Making it Personal*, funded by the Department for Education, which provides support and advice for parents and carers of children and young people with additional needs, and also to commissioners about personalisation and personal budgets.

[www.kids.org.uk/information/100347/106207/106214/making\\_it\\_personal/](http://www.kids.org.uk/information/100347/106207/106214/making_it_personal/)

### In Control

A national charity whose mission is to create a fairer society where everyone needing additional support has the right, responsibility and freedom to control that support.

[www.in-control.org.uk/publications.aspx](http://www.in-control.org.uk/publications.aspx)

### My Future Choices

An information magazine produced by Transition Information Network (see below).

[www.transitioninfonetwork.org.uk/publications/my\\_future\\_choices.aspx](http://www.transitioninfonetwork.org.uk/publications/my_future_choices.aspx)

### The College of Occupational Therapists Specialist Section – Children, Young People and Families

[www.cot.co.uk/cotss-children-young-people-families/cot-ss-children-young-people-families](http://www.cot.co.uk/cotss-children-young-people-families/cot-ss-children-young-people-families)

### Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors' Association (CPHVA)

[www.unite-cphva.org](http://www.unite-cphva.org)

### National Portage Association

[www.portage.org.uk](http://www.portage.org.uk)

### Preparing for Adulthood

[www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk](http://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk)

### Royal College of Midwives

[www.rcm.org.uk](http://www.rcm.org.uk)

### Royal College of Nurses

[www.rcn.org.uk](http://www.rcn.org.uk)

### Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

[www.rcpch.ac.uk](http://www.rcpch.ac.uk)

### Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT)

[www.rcslt.org](http://www.rcslt.org)

### Transition Information Network

An alliance of individuals and organisations that aims to improve the experience of disabled young people's transition to adulthood.

[www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/what-we-do/networks-campaigning/transition-information-network](http://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/what-we-do/networks-campaigning/transition-information-network)

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[www.ncb.org.uk/earllysupport](http://www.ncb.org.uk/earllysupport)

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**Early Years Equality**  
*removing racism • defying discrimination*

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