



7.1.7 Working with families

*'Where a setting identifies a child as having SEN they **must** work in partnership with parents to establish the support the child needs.'*

*'Where a setting makes special educational provision for a child with SEN they should inform the parents and a maintained nursery school **must** inform the parents. All settings should adopt a graduated approach with four stages of action: assess, plan, do and review.'*

SEND Code of Practice, section 5.37 and 5.38

"What makes the biggest difference is having a shared language and a shared understanding of what we are aiming for"

Comment from a South Glos parent

Parents/carers are the most important people in their child's life. A family centred approach for learners of all ages places the child and the family at the heart of the SEND process. It relies on parents/carers and children with SEND being actively involved in the decisions that affect them. Involvement of and support for parents/carers should ensure that the most appropriate services are in place and that parents/carers have a say (co-production) in the planning of the services that they and their children need. Parents and carers have told us that the following makes the biggest difference to them and their child:

- One point of contact in the setting.
- Clear communication
- Regular feedback on what is working well.
- Parents and carers included in any plans or progress discussions about their child.
- Clear contact details for the SENCo
- Regular meetings planned with agreed times.
- Knowing that my child's Keyworker and practitioners working with my child, really understand my child's needs
- Having communication daily with me through a communication book
- Meeting with my child's Keyworker and SENCo every half term to review the SMART targets that we set together so we know what impact the support is having
- Being asked how best to communicate with me
- Sharing information about how my child is doing and the progress they are making

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There is much good practice in settings in South Gloucestershire and through the South Glos Way there is a renewed commitment from leaders to further engage with parents/carers of CYP with SEND. The SEND Code of Practice recognises that parents and carers know their children best of all. Parents tell us that when settings take time to get to know their parents/carers well, value their expertise as individuals and see them as central to the decision making process for their child it results in increased confidence in the system. A commitment to working with parents and carers should be led by the setting's leadership team and reflected in the settings ethos and vision, with all practitioners signed up to these.

We also know and research evidences, that parents are an important support to children's learning in their educational settings. By working together, parents and practitioners can make a significant and positive impact on children's learning and development.

What must the Local Authority do?

They must ensure that:

- CYP and their parents/carers are involved in discussion and decisions about their individual support and about local provision.
- Ensure parents/carers are fully involved in the EHC process from the start and are enabled to participate and co-produce the outcomes together
- Consult with parents/carers and CYP when reviewing local SEND and social care provision
- Provide advice and information in relation to SEND and involve them in developing and reviewing their local offer
- Provide a support service to parents/carers (Supportive Parents Information, Advice and Support) Appendix 1a.
- Ensure that there is sufficient experience amongst local early years providers to support children with SEN.

What should settings do?

Follow the EYFS statutory guidance with regards to assessment, conduct and share ongoing assessments (formative assessments) of a child development with their parent/ carer.

- Carry out a 2 year check for any child in the setting between the ages of two and three, identifying the child's strength and any areas where progress is less

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than expected and share this with parent/ carers and other professionals, such as health visitor and SENCo.

- Complete EYFS profile in the final term in which the child reaches age 5. The results must be shared with parents/carers. The profile must be carried out for all children including those with special educational needs or disabilities. Reasonable adjustments must be made for children with SEND.
- Where a child is identified as needing SEN support, the setting should talk to parents/carers regularly to set clear outcomes and review progress towards them, discuss and agree on strategies/ activities and support that will help achieve them, and how the parent/carer can support the child at home.
- Meet regularly with parents throughout each year. These discussions can build confidence for everyone in the actions being taken by the setting, and they can also strengthen the impact of SEN support by increasing parental engagement in the approaches and learning strategies that are being used. On-going discussion with parents/carers can provide essential information on the impact of SEN support outside school and any changes in the child's needs.
- A professional, with good knowledge and understanding of the child, and who is aware of their needs and attainment, should lead these discussions. This will usually be the child's Keyworker and /or SENCo. It should provide an opportunity for the parent/carer and practitioners agree next steps within a timescale agreed by all.
- Conducting these discussions effectively involves a considerable amount of skill. Settings should ensure that practitioners are supported to manage and lead these conversations as part of their professional development. (See *VLE > Early Years Providers > 11. SEND > Supporting Parents*). These discussions will need to allow sufficient time to explore the parents/carers' views and adequate time should be allowed for this.
- The views of the child should be included in these discussions, usually by listening to the child voice through observation in EYs, in preparation for this meeting.
- A record of the outcomes, action and support agreed through the discussion should be kept and shared with all the appropriate setting staff. A copy of this record should be given to the child's parents/carers. The setting should also keep a copy for their record.

There is e-learning on the VLE for working with parents and information in the EYs SEN handbook and Breaking the News Document all on the VLE to support you with working in partnership and holding meetings with parents. (See *VLE > Learning Spaces* for e-learning or see *VLE > Early Years Providers > 11. SEND* for documentation).

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Proforma's of SEN/ review paperwork are also on the VLE to support settings in recording meetings and reviews with parents. (See *VLE > Learning Spaces* for e-learning or see *VLE > Early Years Providers > 11. SEND > The Graduated Response > Quick Guide to SEND forms, plans and guides*).

Structuring meetings when working in partnership with parents.

There are 4 parts to the structure of a meeting.

- **Explore** – during this phase of the conversation the aim is to gain a clear understanding of the parents'/carers' perspectives. The listener is encouraged to actively listen and check their understanding is accurate through the use of paraphrasing.
- **Focus** – during this phase of the conversation the aim is to work collaboratively with the parents/carers to identify priorities and clarify the key issues.
- **Plan** – during this phase of the conversation the aim is to agree targets, define the desired outcomes and develop an action plan.
- **Review** – during this phase of the conversation the aim is to summarise the meeting and clarify the next steps and further communications.

To further develop ways of working with families setting could:

- Audit the ways in which the setting engages with parents.
- Prioritise areas for development and regularly review progress
- Include 'parental engagement' as a regular agenda item at meetings
- Audit your environment and parent welcome pack. Does it reflect the importance you place on parental engagement? Is it clear for parents how they can raise concerns they may have about their child's development and who with?
- Look at professional development of staff to effectively communicate with families around SEN.
- Engagement of parents in co-production of plans?
- accessibility of settings websites
- accessibility of information for parents about the SE process and where they can seek support from.
- arrangements for meetings with parents and families. How do you engage and share information with parents and families who do not attend meetings or parents evenings?
- What information, advice and support are available for parents and carers to enable them to participate fully?

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Portage Service



Portage is a home-visiting educational service for pre-school children with SEND and their families. Portage aims to 'play a part in minimising the disabling barriers that confront young children and their families and support the national and local development of inclusive services for children'.

Portage are registered and governed by the principles set out by the NPA (National Portage Association) which is a charitable organisation. The South Gloucestershire Portage service meets the requirements for the 5 star service, awarded by the NPA.

Portage in South Gloucestershire

There is a small Portage team in South Gloucestershire, consisting of three Portage Home Visitors. Our criteria is that the child:

- must live in South Gloucestershire
- must have significant delay in two or more areas, and
- is not attending an Early Years setting for more than 10 hours per week.

A child Pediatrician, GP, Health visitor or any other practitioner can refer a child for the service, with parent permission using the [Access and Response form](#) and returning it to the ART team. We can then offer Early Years settings advice and support if we have a child in common. Alternatively, parents can refer directly to Access Response Team (01454 866000)

Further Links

The South Glos Parent Carer Forum [South Glos Parents & Carers \(sglospc.org.uk\)](http://sglospc.org.uk)

SEND and You [Home - SEND and You](#)

[How families are supported in South Gloucestershire | South Gloucestershire \(southglos.gov.uk\)](#)

0-25 Team contact (EHCP enquiries): 0-25ServiceEducationDuty@southglos.gov.uk
0-25 Duty Line (EHCP enquiries): 01454 865137

Education Endowment Foundation [Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning | EEF \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)

VLE > Early Years Providers > 11. SEND