

Frequently asked questions and answers for parents and carers.

Changes to services and provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in South Gloucestershire

This FAQ document aims to answer the main queries from parents/carers but with the expectation that the information will be helpful for other stakeholders. I would like to thank the Institute of Public Care, Oxford Brookes University for collating and compiling this document.

How are services for children and young people with special needs and disabilities (SEND) changing?

From 1 September 2014, all local authorities in England, working with their local health partners, are launching services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). These will join up help across education, health and care, from birth to 25. Help will be offered at the earliest possible point, with children and young people with SEND and their parents or carers having more control and more choice and being fully involved in decisions about their support and what they want to achieve. This will help lead to better outcomes and more efficient ways of working.

From 1 September, every local authority area will have:

- A single assessment process for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) for children and young people with more complex needs which replaces SEN (Special Education Needs) statements;

- A single contact in the new 0-25 service who work closely with parents, carers and young people to coordinate and join up services during the assessment process and the delivery of an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP);
- No transition to adult services at 18 - children and young people and their families remain with the new 0-25 service if there are continuing needs;
- A published local offer in one place of all services available in that local authority area;
- The option of a personal budget with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) for parents, carers and young people;
- Independent advice and support;

This is not about cutting services, but about creating a better system that puts children/young people and their families first.

0-25 Service

What is happening in South Gloucestershire?

The local authority is setting up a new integrated 0-25 Service in its Children, Adults and Health department. This service starts on 1 September 2014 and is designed to deliver joined up working across education, health and social care for children and young people up to 25, with special educational needs and disabilities in South Gloucestershire.

Who is in the new service?

Existing support services for special educational needs and social services (Children's Health and Disability Team-CHAD) are now together in the new 0-25 service for children and young people up to 25 with special educational needs/disabilities (SEND). They are split into two geographical teams.

Each team has experience and expertise in:

- children's health and disability including occupational therapy;
- children's special education needs;
- children and Adults Safeguarding;
- Early Years;
- portage;
- preparation for adulthood.

It is an integrated service with professionals from different disciplines formally working together and an exciting opportunity for South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) to develop a fully joined up service that puts children and young people up to 25 at the centre of all that

it does. Staff will remain based in the council offices in Badminton Road and will continue to deliver a high quality service during this period of change.

For more information on the new service please visit www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer

Who do I contact if I want help?

First Point is the 'single front door' to all children and young people's services in South Gloucestershire, including the new 0-25 service.

Ring 01454 866000 or email FirstPoint@southglos.gov.uk

Staff in First Point will talk to you to find out more your situation so they can give the right advice and support. This may be a referral to the new 0-25 service in which case you may be asked to complete a short self- assessment form. Alternatively, you may be signposted to support available in your area via the Local Offer.

The Local Offer www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer has information on services available for children and young people with special educational needs/disabilities in South Gloucestershire).

Anyone else (from a school, service, voluntary organisation) who wants help for a child or young person up to 25 years old with special educational needs/disabilities from the new 0-25 service completes a 'request for help' form and provides supporting evidence. This is the same process as that for referral to other children's and young people's services. First Point screens this information, with guidance from the 0-25 service. If a referral is not appropriate, they signpost to what is available via the Local Offer.

See www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer on how you access the new service.

Who does the 0-25 service support?

The new service supports children and young people up to 25 who have special educational needs/disability. The level of support it provides depends on the level of need. Generally the more complex the need, the more support is likely to be required and the more involved the 0-25 service will be. But of course it is not as straightforward as that. Needs change, and the family's situation is important so we need to talk to you and your child/young person to get the full picture to see if we can help or if you would get better support from what's available in the Local Offer.

'Needs Indicators' have been developed by the new service working in consultation with parents, children/young people. They will be used as a guide by staff in First Point to help them screen requests for referral to the new 0-25 service and signpost to what's available in the Local Offer. Staff in the new 0-25 service will also use this guide when talking to parents, children and young people about levels of need.

For more information on the 'Needs Indicators' and the pathway for referrals see www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer

My child has been referred to the new service. How will the new 0-25 service support me and my family?

Every referral accepted by the 0 -25 service is allocated a Lead Worker/Lead Professional. The first stage involves the Lead Worker/Lead Professional working closely with the child/young person and their family to gather and review evidence to decide whether to do a 'needs assessment'. The Lead Worker/Lead Professional is supported by their manager and a multi-agency panel.

If the decision at this stage is that the child/young person's needs would be better met via the Local Offer, then the Lead Worker/Lead Professional provides advice and support on how to access those local services.

If the decision is to do a 'needs assessment' then the Lead Worker/Lead Professional contacts other relevant services, and together with the parents, as the Team around the Child (TAC) they work with the child/young person to find out their needs and personal goals and how the plan of support can help them achieve those goals and reach their potential.

The child/young person's plan of support may become an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). EHCPs are replacing SEN statements.

The "Needs Indicators" are used throughout the assessment process as a guide to help services match needs to appropriate levels of service

See the Local Offer www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer for the criteria and pathway for accessing the new 0-25 service.

Education, Health and Care Plans - EHCPs and Special Educational Needs (SEN) Statements

What is an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)?

From 1 September 2014, an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) replaces a Special Educational Needs (SEN) statement and a Learning Difficulty Assessment/Section 139a (LDA).

An EHCP is a plan for support for a child or a young person up to 25. Like a SEN statement, it is a statutory document. Before the plan can be developed, there is a 'needs assessment' which identifies the child or young person's educational needs and any associated health and social care needs.

The child or young person's needs and personal goals are at the centre of the needs assessment and EHCP. The plan sets out clearly what support should be provided and

the 'desired outcomes' i.e. how the support provided by parents and carers and services working together will help the child or young person achieve their goals and reach their potential.

South Gloucestershire's needs assessment and EHCP has been developed in consultation with parents and carers, children and young people.

For copies of forms see Local offer www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer

Who completes the EHCP?

The needs assessment and the EHCP are completed by the child/young person's Lead Worker/Lead Professional from the 0-25 service, working closely with that child/young person and their parents

Who would be the Lead Worker/ Lead Professional in the 0-25 service?

Once a referral is accepted by the new 0-25 service, a child, young person and their family is allocated a named person as their 'single point of contact'.

This named person is either a Lead Worker or a Lead Professional who works closely with the child, young person and their family at all stages of their involvement with the new service. The aim is that their expertise matches the needs of the child or young person. Sometimes those needs are not clear until later on in an assessment process so that's when the named person working with the family may need to change. In some cases you may not need a lot of contact with the service so your named person may be office based and available on the phone or email.

Can a parent choose their Lead Worker/Lead Professional?

The new 0-25 service will work closely with children, young people and their families and will take into account family views on who they would like as their Lead Worker/Lead Professional.

How do you decide who has an EHCP?

The definition of Special Educational Need and Disability has not changed so the legal test of when a child or young person requires an EHCP remains the same as that for a SEN statement. EHCPs are replacing SEN statements. If an EHCP is agreed for a child or young person then, like a statement, it means that it is a statutory document.

Similar to the current process for SEN statements, a multi- agency panel makes the final decision on whether the plan for support should be an EHCP . This happens after the assessment and plan for support have been discussed and agreed with children, young people and their parents working closely with their Lead Worker/Lead Professional from the 0-25 service.

What happens if the plan of support does not become a statutory EHCP?

It can still be used as a plan of support for a child/young person. It is still their plan but it will not be a statutory document. Working with your Lead Worker/Lead Professional, you can use the plan to identify support available via the Local Offer.

What happens if I am not happy about decisions?

All existing mediation services and rights to appeal remain. South Glos Parent Carer Forum can give independent advice and support www.sglospc.org.uk or telephone 01454 501009/(mobile 07827322358). You can also contact your local Parent Partnership service Supportive Parents www.supportiveparents.org.uk or telephone 01179897725.

For more information see Local Offer www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer

How long will it take to complete an EHCP?

Where it is assessed and agreed that one is needed, it should be finalised within 20 weeks compared to 26 weeks for a SEN statement.

How does the needs assessment for an EHCP fit with other assessment processes for children and young people?

- If a child or young person has any other assessments they can be used to support a request for help from the 0-25 service providing the parent or young person gives permission for this information to be shared.
- For many children under five years old, it is sometimes difficult to identify whether their additional needs are special educational needs because they are so young. For them, a Single Assessment for Early Help (SAF) may be more appropriate. Health visitors, children's centres and preschools can provide advice on this.
- Any child or young person under 18 who does not meet the criteria for a needs assessment for an EHCP, but has additional needs, can ask (via their parents if required) for a Single Assessment for Early Help (SAF). Your local school, pre-school or health contact can also provide more advice on this so can First Point 01454 866000.

- Please note that if safeguarding concerns arise in the course of preparing any assessments on children, young people or vulnerable adults (this includes 0-25 needs assessments) then a referral is made to Social Care whose investigations then take priority over other assessment work.

For information on Single Assessment for Early Help, see Local Offer
www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer

How does the new 0-25 service work with health professionals?

Staff supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities will continue to work closely with professionals in health services. During an assessment and the delivery of support, health professionals such as health visitors, nurses, speech and language therapists, are part of the team working alongside the family to support their child and young person; this is known as the Team around the Child (TAC).

My child already has a SEN statement/LDA Section139a (Learning Disability Assessment). What will happen to that when the new service starts this September?

Over the course of four years from September 2014, all SEN statements will become Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

This means all children and young people who currently have a statement of Special Educational Needs will continue to have their statement reviewed and have a planned transfer to an EHCP over the next four years. Wherever possible this will be done during the annual review process at key stage transfers. Their current statements will remain in place until this time.

All existing LDAs139a will be given priority and transferred to EHCPs within two years should the young person remain in education or training.

The new 0-25 service will contact all those children, young people and families with a SEN statement or an LDA to explain how this transfer to an EHCP will happen.

We are in the process of applying for a SEN statement for our child. How are we affected by the launch of the new service?

All children and young people who have requested a statement before 1 September 2014 remain under the current process.

From 1 September t, all new enquiries for accessing special educational needs support go via First Point - 01454 866000, to the new 0-25 service. Should the child or young person meet the criteria for the 0-25 service, a needs assessment is completed and an EHCP may be the outcome.

What happens when my child's current SEN statement comes to an end?

It is reviewed and if it is assessed that there are continuing educational needs, an EHCP will be completed.

However if at review your child/young person has made sufficient progress or their needs can be met through the Local Offer, then the plan will end.

My child is under 5. I think my child needs additional support. What do I do?

Speak to your health visitor or if your child attends a nursery/pre-school or children's centre, to the staff there. They may suggest a single assessment for early help (SAF) or help you contact the new service via First Point - 01454 866000.

If Parents contact First Point for support from the 0-25 service, they may be asked to complete a self-assessment form first. Staff in First Point will help them to complete this form.

My child is school age. I think my child needs additional support. What do I do?

If your child is at school, approach the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) at their school. They will work with you to identify your child's needs and aspirations, how the school can provide support and, using the Local Offer, what else is available in the area. If children and young people have more complex needs and are likely to require access to the specialist expertise in the new 0-25 service, the SENCO can contact the service, via First Point - 01454 866000 , and request their involvement.

I have a SEN statement and I am about to leave school/have left school. How can this new service help me?

Should you choose to continue your education or access work based training, it may be appropriate to transfer to an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Your Lead Worker/Lead Professional will work closely with you and your family to find out what you want to achieve and the support you need.

For example do you want to go to college? South Gloucestershire wants to ensure that all of their young people have opportunities to enjoy and achieve their full potential and is working with local colleges and employers to develop more courses and work opportunities with appropriate support.

Details of these courses will be added to the Local offer www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer

I am over 16 and need support from the 0-25 service. Will my parents be involved?

Involvement of parents/carers is, of course, always encouraged but if a young person is over 16 and is clear that they do not want their parents' involvement and views to be included in the needs assessment and/or the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), then their wishes will be respected, as long as this is appropriate.

I am under 25 and receive support from Adult services. How am I affected by the new 0-25 service?

You will be able to remain with adult services if that provides the best support for your needs. If you are 18, or soon to be 18, and want to continue in education or go on to work based training then you or your allocated worker from adult services should contact the service via First Point - 01454 866000 to find out how they can help.

You should also look at what is available via the Local offer www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer

I am moving from/into South Gloucestershire.

All Local authority areas will have a new 0-25 service from 1 September 2014. Just like a SEN statement, if you have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) then it is 'portable' which means that the 0-25 service in your new local authority area allocates a named person to work with you to identify how their Local Offer can deliver the outcomes of your EHCP.

How will we make sure children and young people are safe?

If there are safeguarding concerns, the practice is exactly the same as it is for other agencies, services and members of the public; contact First Point - 01454 866000.

How will we know when the EHCP is working well?

An Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is 'person centred' and 'outcomes focussed'; that means the aims of the EHCP are based on the needs and personal goals of a child or

young person up to 25 and the support offered should make a difference to that child or young person. So we need to ask you and your child and young person whether things have improved.

Your Lead Worker/Lead Professional from the 0-25 service works with you, your parents and other services supporting you in a team around the child (TAC) to review your EHCP. You talk about what's working or what's not working and together see if it is possible to adjust the plan to offer you better support.

The local authority will monitor the performance and quality of the new 0-25 service as it does with all its services. All staff in the new 0-25 service has professional supervision and professional training to support them to deliver a high quality service.

For more information and how to feedback your experience and views see Local offer www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer

Local Offer

What is the 'Local offer'?

The 'Local offer' is clear, accessible information in one place www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, (SEND) and their parents/carers, about services and provision available for them in South Gloucestershire. For those who do not have access to a computer, the Local Offer will be available in other ways and in libraries, one-stop shops and other public places.

What is in the Local Offer?

- How the new 0-25 service works, including criteria for accessing the service, copies of forms such as the 'needs assessment' and the EHCP.
- How personal budgets work.
- Where to get independent advice and support.
- Local authority and health services, available to everyone (universal services).
- Local authority and health services for vulnerable children and young people/young adults (targeted and preventative services).
- Local authority and health specialist services such for children and young people/young adults with complex needs.

The Local Offer is more than a directory of services and will be added to all the time.

South Gloucestershire Council) is developing its Local Offer in consultation with parents, children and young people. It will include what is available in the wider community, neighbouring areas, in leisure centres, and via local voluntary and community organisations, churches, local employers and businesses.

Your feedback and ideas for improvements to the Local Offer are welcome. See www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer

Are services available for special educational needs (SEN) in schools part of the Local Offer?

Yes and there are links in the Local Offer to the website of every school and college in the area plus some beyond South Gloucestershire that we know children and young people from South Gloucestershire attend.

In time every local school, college and pre-school in the area will have information in the Local Offer on how they support children and young people with Special Educational needs/Disabilities.

How do schools support children and young people with special educational needs?

Schools look at the needs of every individual child and put in place appropriate 'SEN support'. They no longer have to put children and young people in a category of 'School Action' or 'School Action Plus'. They work closely with families and like the 0-25 service and their focus is the needs and aspirations of an individual child or young person

The expectation is that all children in schools will have transferred to 'SEN support' by the end of the spring term 2015, and that for older pupils, schools will explore how they will support their transition to post 16 education or training.

What is the 'Local Offer' for over 18s?

'SEN support' is being introduced into FE colleges and sixth forms. The expectations are similar to those for schools; that colleges will work closely with young people to find out their needs and aspirations and what support they think will help them best.

Like schools, they will contribute to the 'Local Offer' providing information on how they support young people with special educational needs or a disability. They will work more closely with schools and adult services to support preparation for adulthood.

For older young people, support is likely to focus on promoting independence, making progress towards employment and participating in the wider community.

Will the Local Offer contain information on what is available outside South Gloucestershire?

There will be information on some specialist health services and schools and colleges outside the area attended by children and young people from South Gloucestershire. However, most of the information is about what's available for residents in this area.

The plan is to develop and improve what is available locally so that support for children and young people helps them to remain in their communities, and close to their families.

South Gloucestershire, via commissioning, continues to work with health services the voluntary and private organisations and with children, young people and their families to develop and improve services, making sure they meet needs.

There will be the opportunity to provide feedback on your experience and thoughts on what is available in the area via the Local Offer website and annual events and surveys run by the council and its partners.

To give feedback, see www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer

Personal Budgets

What is a personal budget?

From September 2014, if you have an Education, Health and Care Plan –(EHCP) you can choose to have a personal budget. A personal budget is the total value of all the resources being made available to you in your EHCP.

What is a direct payment?

Within your personal budget, you can choose to have a direct payment i.e. the money to pay directly for some of the support you require.

The section in the Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) on personal budgets must set out how direct payments will be used to deliver agreed outcomes; how much it is and on what it will be spent.

What support in my Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) can be available via a direct payment?

At the moment, most of the resources available in an EHCP are provided and paid for directly by education, social care or health services and therefore support like therapies and school placements are not available as a direct payment.

If you need more specialist or personalised support, you might choose to organise and buy that yourself using a direct payment.

Over time, and in consultation with parents, children and young people a wider range of provision and services will be available via a direct payment for those who choose to have a personal budget in their EHCP.

For details of support available using a direct payment, see the Local Offer www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer

What are the benefits of a personal budget?

The idea is that personal budgets will allow for more creative use of resources and give children, young people and their family's greater choice and control over how support is delivered to meet the agreed outcomes in an EHCP.

Where can I get help and advice on personal budgets?

Should children and young people and their parents choose to have a personal budget in their EHCP, help will be available from their Lead Worker/Lead Professional in the 0-25 service.

Guidance is available in the Local Offer on personal budgets including costs, types of support and services available via a direct payment.

See www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer

Independent advice and support is also available from South Gloucestershire Parent-Carers' Forum www.sglospc.org.uk or the parent partnership service Supportive Parents www.supportiveparents.org.uk

Information and advice / Information sharing

Where can I get information and advice?

For information on the services available for children and young people up to 25 with special educational needs/disability and how to access them, look at the Local Offer www.southglos.org.uk/local-offer

If you would prefer to talk to someone then South Gloucestershire's First Point - 01454 866000 is the 'single front door' for all children and young people's services. Contact them if you want help including support from the new 0-25 service they will also be able to signpost to services available via the Local Offer.

Where can I get independent advice and support?

South Gloucestershire Parent-Carers' Forum will continue to work alongside the council to develop the new 0-25 service and to provide a network of support and signposting to parents and carers. If parents have any concerns or feedback, the Forum would love to hear from families.

See www.sglospc.org.uk for more information on their services and events or telephone 01454 501009/(mobile 07827 322 358).

From September 2014 every local authority area will have access to 'Independent Supporters'. The role of the Independent Supporter is to help families navigate the new arrangements. They can support individual families with things like liaison across difference services, help with the new assessment process, transfer from a SEN statement to an EHCP or advice on how to use personal budgets.

In South Gloucestershire, the parent partnership service Supportive Parents will now also be providing 'Independent Supporters' in addition to their general advice and support role for parents of children and young people with special educational needs/disabilities. You may hear them referred to as SENDIAS. If you would like their help see www.supportiveparents.org.uk or contact 0117 9897 725.

There will be training and information events for parents. Details in the Local Offer www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer

For a wealth of general information for parents/carers on the new arrangements for supporting children, young people up to 25 who have special educational needs and disabilities, see www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk. The Council for Disabled Children is a national organisation working closely with government.

Who sees information about my child/young person?

Parents and young people own their assessments (the exception is safeguarding information which is shared as required by law to protect a child, young person or adult) and so give permission for that information to be shared.

The council is developing its IT system in consultation with parents/young people and key services so that information can be shared online and securely on a 'need to know' basis.

What happens if I'm not happy with what is happening?

There is independent advice and support and there will continue to be access to mediation services for those who need it.

See Local Offer www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer or contact First Point - 01454 866000.

The new 0-25 service will work in partnership with you and your children and young people up to 25 at all stages of involvement with the service. The needs assessment and an Education, Health and Care Plan are the products of a team approach; a TAC, where the team are the services and parents/carers working closely with each other with the support of a Lead Worker/Lead Professional for the benefit of a child/young person.

So you and your child/young person should have more control and choice, and more opportunities in the process to express concerns and work together with services to reasonably resolve issues as they arise.

How will I be kept up to date with new developments for children and young people with special educational needs/disabilities (SEND)?

If you are already with the 0-25 service, ask your Lead Worker/Lead Professional.

You could also contact South Gloucestershire Parent Carer Forum www.sglospc.org.uk, Tel 01454 501009/(Mobile 07827322358). Or Supportive Parents www.supportiveparents.org.uk, Tel 01179897725.

There will be a programme of information and training events open to all parents and other key partners such as schools, health and voluntary sector.

See Local Offer www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer or ring First Point 01454 – 866000.

Effective from: 01 September 2014

Review date: 01 April 2015