

# Navigating getting support: Roles of professionals

**It can be difficult to know who to turn to, to get support for autistic individuals and their families, and for those who have concerns regarding social communication development.**

We hope this list will help to clarify some of those questions.

## Health Visitor

A Health Visitor is assigned to a child at birth. The service completes developmental checks on children and can advise on early development. They can signpost parents or carers to available support groups and refer them to other services, for example Speech and Language Therapy and a Community Paediatrician, if needed.

## School Health/Nurse

The role of the School Nurse varies between NHS trusts, check your local NHS trust website to identify how your local service can support you.

## Specialist Teaching and Learning Service Teacher/Specialist Advisory Teacher

A Specialist Teaching Service is a team of experienced highly skilled teachers who specialise in areas such as communication and interaction, and social, emotional and mental health needs. They can give advice and strategies to support individuals and provide training to schools. Your school's SENCo can refer to the service or search on your local authority website for further information on how you can contact your local team.

## Community Paediatrician

Community Paediatricians are specialist doctors who are trained to assess and manage a wide range of developmental and physical differences and disorders, such as Autism, ADHD and Cerebral Palsy. Your GP or other health

professionals working with your child can refer you to a Community Paediatrician.

## SENDCo/SENCo

All school and nursery settings have a Special Education Needs (and Disability) Co-ordinator. They ensure that students who require additional support in the school have access to it. They also support with referrals to other professionals (as required), ensure Individual Education Plans are in place (as required) and support in Education, Health and Care Plan applications and implementation. See our **Education, health and care plan** factsheet for more information on this.

## Early Help

This service can support individuals and families when problems emerge. They can offer parent support and emotional and wellbeing support. Early Help services can provide support to a range of families and individuals including families facing abuse and conflict and children with disabilities. They can be contacted through schools, nurseries, health services and social care.

## Social Care

Social Workers can arrange care for individuals and their families or carers that supports their wellbeing and ultimately keeps them safe. They can support access to services such as day care and respite.

## CAMHS/CYPMHS

CAMHS = Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service

CYPMHS = Children and Young People Mental Health Service

This is an NHS service that can assess, provide treatment and support children and young adults with emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties. The team often consists of Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Social Workers and Psychotherapists. Referrals to the service can be made by a GP, Community Paediatricians, Teachers or Social Care.

## National Portage Association (NPA)

This is a national charity supporting Portage services, families and professionals.

Portage is a home-visiting educational service for pre-school children with SEN and their families. Portage aims to work with families to help them develop a quality of life and experience and reduce barriers for themselves and their young children. A trained Portage Home Visitor will support with regular home visits and parents can share their understanding of their child's abilities and support needs. There are currently over 100 Portage services across England and Wales. All Portage services offer an open referral system, accepting referrals from families as well as other agencies. Each Portage service is different and the model of delivery will differ from area to area. Parents should not be charged for Portage home visiting which is usually delivered as part of a local authority service offer.

## Therapy Services

**Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT):** Speech and Language Therapists can assess and review an individual's communication, interaction, language and speech development and provide therapy input and support in implementing communication systems. Speech and Language Therapists can also support in your child's feeding and swallowing.

**Occupational Therapist (OT):** Occupational Therapists aim to support individuals in participating in everyday activities, for example dressing, eating or toileting. They also support in sensory processing and the way our brain organises and understands sensory input. This can include emotional regulation.

**Physiotherapist:** Physiotherapists work with individuals to develop their gross motor skills (e.g. walking, jumping and running).

In all three therapy services therapeutic input can be offered directly (face to face therapy intervention) or indirectly (through training, programmes and advice). Referrals can be made through an individual's GP, Health Visitor, School Health, SENCo or via parents. Look at your local NHS trust's website for service contact details and referral criteria.

## The Local Offer

- The Local Offer gives children and young adults with special educational needs or disabilities, and their families, information about what support services the local authority has available in their area.
- The Local Offer must have information about schools, colleges, training, special health support, hobbies and leisure activities, support for preparing for adulthood and transport services.
- Every local authority must also talk with children and young adults with SEND to identify and review what services they may need and to make improvements.
- Every local authority must have a Local Offer and is responsible for making sure that everyone can access it either on their local authority website or in writing e.g. a leaflet.

For further support and to search for local and national support: [www.beyondautism.org.uk/about-autism/services/](http://www.beyondautism.org.uk/about-autism/services/)