Support in the Early Years for children with additional needs

A guide for parents and carers

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/pps
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Support in the Early Years (0-5) For Children with Additional Needs

This is a guide to the support available to you and your child if s/he has additional needs and has not reached the statutory school age (the term after they are five).

For more detailed information on services, please see Cambridgeshire County Council’s website: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk and use the Search box to find what you are looking for.

If you do not have access to the Internet, please contact the Parent Partnership Service (SEND Information Advice and Support Service - SENDIASS) on 01223 699214 and we can supply further information and telephone numbers for any of the organisations listed in this leaflet.

The information in this booklet was up to date at the time of printing. We apologise in advance if you find that information has changed in the meantime and we will try to update it regularly.

Last updated: February 2016
Early Years Education

All 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to 15 hours a week free Early Years Education. A growing number of 2 year olds (those from low income families who meet the criteria, or children who have been adopted, or are looked after by the LA, or in receipt of DLA, or have an Education, Health & Care Plan) are also entitled to 15 hours a week free early years education. Further details can be found from: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/childcare

Or speak to someone at your local children’s centre: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/cambschildrencentres

This education could take place in a variety of Early Years Education “settings”, for example:

- nursery schools
- day nurseries
- pre-schools
- with childminders

You can read more about what happens at an Early Years setting in the “Parents Guide to Early Years Foundation Stage”, available at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

All 2 year olds are also offered an Early Years health and development check between 2 and 2.5 years old. This is known as a Healthy Child Programme review and is carried out by a health visitor. Any difficulties or problems can be picked up and your child can be referred to specialists if needed. Around this time, if your child is in a setting, you should receive a short written summary of your child’s progress to share with your health visitor. This will help you see if your child needs any extra support. These checks may
be done by the health visitor and setting, or separately. For more information, please see:

www.gov.uk (type “Progress check at age 2 and EYFS Profile” in the Search box)

You can put the review in your child’s red healthcare record so that you can share it with others who might be able to help. You can raise your concerns with the health visitor too.

You might also be offered another health and development review when your child is aged 4–5, so you and your health visitor can make sure the child is up to date with immunisations, discuss general health and development and check on any dental health questions you may have.

For more information, please see: www.foundationyears.org.uk

What you can do if you have a concern

If you have concerns about your child’s early development, don’t hesitate to discuss them with any of the following:

- your GP (doctor)
- your health visitor
- a key person at your child’s nursery or pre-school or the designated SENCO
- someone from your local children’s centre
- your social worker (if you have one)
- anyone else who gives you advice or support

You might be concerned about your child’s communication, understanding and learning, sensory and/or physical
development, or behaviour and the way s/he relates to other people.

Some Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) are identified at a young age, before the child starts at a pre-school or nursery. For other children, it may not be until they are older.

**Common Assessment Framework (CAF)**

If your child (or children) needs extra help and support, a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) will help identify this as quickly as possible, so that they get the help they need early on. A Think Family approach is used to make sure all the needs of the different members of the family are supported.

A Family CAF starts with a discussion between you and someone you are working with, and your child (if appropriate) about your child’s strengths and needs. This helps to fill in the Family CAF form. You are asked if you are happy with what has been written on the form. You then discuss who may be able to help, who can see the information and who should be invited to be part of a team around the child. You will meet with the team and tell them about your family’s needs and what you want to change. A Lead Professional will be identified and as a team you will work together to create a Family Support plan. This will be reviewed regularly by you all until the extra support is no longer needed.

The CAF is **voluntary** and any information you provide will only be shared with your agreement.

For more details on CAFs, see: [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk) and type “CAF” into the Search box.
The Early Support Pathway

This is a national programme for families with children who are aged 0-5 with significant and complex additional needs or disability who are likely to require on-going specialist support from across education, health and care. It has been developed for families and professionals to ensure that all services are well co-ordinated, family focussed and responsive to your child’s needs, right from the start.

A lead professional, chosen with you, provides a single point of contact for you and the professionals supporting your child. They help to plan and co-ordinate the services, make sure you have the information you need and help you to use local services. They also use the Early Support Family File which reduces the need for you to repeat your child’s story.

In Cambridgeshire, there are 3 Early Support Co-ordinators, who are the central contacts. They co-ordinate referrals and provide information and resources. They help arrange multi-agency Team Around the Family meetings (TAF meetings) and ensure that Family Service Plans are developed, updated and shared. These plans give details of the most important things that you have agreed need to happen to help you and your child, what action is going to take place and by whom.

Early Support Co-ordinators can be contacted on:

**Cambridge City and South:** 01223 884491  
**East Cambs and Fenland:** 01945 488048  
**Huntingdonshire:** 01480 418646

Free downloadable information for parents is available and has been written in conjunction with parents. There is also now information that relates to older children. The areas covered
include:

- Autistic Spectrum Disorders
- Behaviour
- Cerebral Palsy
- Deafness and Hearing Loss
- Down Syndrome
- If your child has a rare condition
- Learning Disabilities
- Multi-sensory Impairments
- Neurological Disorders
- Sleep
- Speech, Language and Communication Needs
- Visual Impairment
- Living without a diagnosis
- Developmental Journals (which help families and practitioners record, celebrate and support a child’s progress).

These can be found at: www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk

Go to Resources and type “Early Support” in the Search Resources box.

**Extra Help in Early Years Education Settings**

1. **Additional Needs**
   There will be someone at the Early Years setting called the **SENCo** (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) who is responsible for ensuring that the needs of children with additional needs are met. They may provide different activities, or arrange more support from a particular member of staff. Settings will discuss your child’s needs with you and how they can be supported.
2. **Specialist Support**

If it appears that a child has not made expected progress, despite support, the setting may call upon outside professionals for advice (with parental permission). This might be the Area SENCo in the first instance. If other services are needed, this may involve completing a CAF (see earlier) and recording the next steps in more detail. An Individual Child Plan (ICP) or Behaviour Support Plan (BSP) may be completed. The setting will be expected to review plans and progress with you on a regular basis.

3. **Education, Health and Care Plans**

If your child has long-term, complex needs identified, and has not responded to support, you or an education setting can request an EHC needs assessment which may lead to an EHCP. These have replaced Statements of Special Educational Needs. For more information on this, please see:

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/ehcplan

**Education Funding for Early Years children who need extra support**

1. **“Maintained” settings**

   This means Early Years settings that are funded through the local authority (Cambridgeshire County Council), for example a nursery school or nursery classes attached to primary schools and or Children’s Centres.

2. **“Non-maintained” settings**

   These are private organisations, such as playgroups, day nurseries, or childminders. If a child attends one of these and has complex needs, the setting can apply for **Early Years Access Funding**. They should do this after discussing and reviewing your child’s needs with you first and involving other
relevant professionals. For more information on funding, see: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk and type “Early Years Funding” into the Search box.

**Early Years SEND Specialist Support Services**

This team supports children with SEND, their families and Early Years Education settings. A child’s needs have to be at a particular level to use these services and some services are only available to children with significant and complex needs. The team consists of:

1. **Early Years Area SENCos** – they train, support and advise SENCos and staff in Early Years settings.

2. **Early Years Specialist Support Teachers** provide specialist support for children with complex SEND. This might be in an Early Years setting or at home – working closely with you and the relevant staff.

3. **Specialist/Sector Support Workers** provide support for children in homes, settings and Children Centres to support learning and development

4. **Portage Home Visitors** provide support and practical advice to families in the home and the transition to setting or school for children with significant and complex needs focussing on the parents’ priorities and concerns.

5. **SCOT Home Visitors** – social communication home visitors – work with children with significant social communication difficulties and/or a diagnosis of autism. They can provide advice and support to parents/carers for up to 5 hours per week, focussing on the parents’ priorities and concerns. They can also work in Early Years settings to ensure consistency.
To contact the Early Years Support for Learning Team, telephone:

**Cambridge City and South:** 01223 728311  
**East Cambs and Fenland:** 01354 750269  
**Huntingdon:** 01480 373470

**Moving on to Primary School**

When your child is coming up to school age, you will have the opportunity to talk with the staff at the Early Years setting about the next stage. It is useful to visit some schools and talk to the SENCo (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) about your child’s needs. (See PPS/SENDIASS booklet “Visiting a New School”).

Before your child moves on, it is a good idea to have a meeting between the Early Years setting and the new school in order to share strategies, information and plan the support for your child’s move (transition) into primary school. The plan might be called a **Transition Plan**. This might also involve someone from the Early Years Support for Learning Team or another Early Support professional.

**Other Support Services**

It is always advisable to talk to your child’s key worker in the first instance. Other organisations that may be able to help include:

**Children’s Centres** provide both universal (for everyone) and targeted services for families with children under 5. They work in partnership with midwives, health visitors, early years settings, Early Support, JobCentre Plus and others and are an integral part of locality teams (see below). All centres can provide advice and information, as well as signposting to other services. Children’s Centre Family Workers provide some 1:1 Family Work and deliver Parenting Programmes. Each area
has a children’s centre which provides extra facilities and resources for families with children with SEND, including parent groups and specialist parenting programmes, such as Stepping Stones Triple P, which is for parents/carers (of children aged 2-12 with SEND) who have concerns about their behaviour. The course aims to improve family relationships, help parents manage challenging behaviour and developmental issues common in children with additional needs. It also helps parents learn new skills and enable them to teach their children new skills. For more information, please contact your local children’s centre which can be found at: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/cambschildrencentres

**Locality Teams** are Local Authority teams made up of professionals working in a range of different fields for families with children and young people aged 0-19. They work closely with schools and co-ordinate Early Help services for children and young people.

**Parent Partnership Service (providing Cambridgeshire’s SEND Information Advice and Support Service - SENDIASS)** - offers information, advice and support to parents and carers who have a child or young person with special educational needs and/or a disability (SEND) and to children and young people themselves. You can contact us in confidence and we promise to listen and offer you impartial advice and support. We also provide training for parents on topics relating to SEND. Contact our Confidential Advice Line: 01223 699214.

**Disabled Children’s Social Care**
If your child has a disability, you might be able to access support from this service. You can contact Social Care and ask for an assessment. If your child meets the criteria, there are a range of services on offer including short breaks.
**Short breaks** are designed to give disabled children enjoyable experiences away from their primary carers. This can help with their personal and social development and reduce social isolation. To request a Social Care Assessment (or for Short Breaks), phone the Contact Centre on 0345 045 5203

Information on all the services above can be found at:  
[www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

This website also contains useful information on other **statutory services** that might be involved with your child, e.g. **educational psychology**, **speech and language therapy**, **occupational therapy**, **CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health service)**, **hearing/visual impairment service**.

**Voluntary Sector organisations**

**Home-Start** provides trained volunteers who visit families with at least one child under 5. Emotional and practical support for those who are finding it hard to cope – for a variety of reasons, including disability. Visit: [www.home-start.org.uk](http://www.home-start.org.uk)

**Contact-a-Family** offers support, information and advice to families with a disabled child and campaigns for families to receive a better deal. They have a useful on-line directory of medical conditions and a free helpline. See: [www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk) for further details.

**SCOPE** works with disabled people and their families, offering practical support – from information services (particularly at the time of diagnosis) to education and everyday care. They have an Early Years team. See: [www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk).

**National Autistic Society** provides information, support and services to people with autism and their families. See:  
[www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)
**MENCAP** provides information, advice and support to parents/carers and families of children with a learning disability. See: [www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)

**Pinpoint** is a local, independent information, support and parental involvement network run for parents by parents in Cambridgeshire. See: [www.pinpoint-cambs.org.uk](http://www.pinpoint-cambs.org.uk)

**I-CAN** is a charity that provides information and advice relevant to children with speech, language and communication difficulties. See: [www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk)

The above list does not include every relevant organisation, but perhaps gives you a starting point, by covering some of the best-known organisations that might be able to help you.

**Groups**

There are various groups across Cambridgeshire for pre-school children with SEND and their parents/carers. Many parents/carers find it helpful to meet others with children with SEND and to access specialist services who might attend the group. As these groups are often changing, for up-to-date information, contact your local children’s centre for details of what’s on in your area. For details of your local children’s centre, see: [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/cambschildrencentres](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/cambschildrencentres)

Joan Adamson runs the “SCIP” database and produces information on Cambridgeshire groups for children with SEND, phone: 01480 379827, or search for “SCIP” on [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

Cambridgeshire.net has information on local support groups. See: [www.cambridgeshire.net](http://www.cambridgeshire.net)
There is also an increasing number of on-line parent to parent groups. See individual voluntary organisations’ websites above for details.

**Some tips on how you can help your child**

- Give lots of praise to encourage them.
- Make talking fun through play.
- Take time to relax with your child—share books with them or watch TV together. Then have a chat about the book or TV programme.
- Make bedtime stories, and nursery rhymes part of your daily routine, so children link reading and words with cuddles and fun.
- As you probably know, most small children learn best through play. Snakes and ladders helps number skills and turn taking, “pretend” play and finger games are good for language.
- Help your child become an expert - knowing a lot about a topic, for example football or animals, helps them feel positive about themselves and about learning.
- Exchange ideas with staff at the Early Years setting. Ask the staff for ideas of things you could do at home and share your ideas with them. You know your child best and what works with them, for example particular books, dressing up games and so on.
- Get new ideas from groups set up to help parents. If your child has epilepsy for instance, then there is an organisation which can give advice. You can share any good ideas with the Early Years setting.

Cambridgeshire County Council have produced a useful leaflet called “Help Me Learn”. Go to [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk) and type “Help Me Learn Leaflet” in the search box.

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Please ask us for copies of this leaflet in Braille, on audio cassette or in a different language.

Prosimy pytać u nas o kopie niniejszej ulotki w języku Braille’a, w wersji audio lub w innym języku.

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请向我们索取本小册的其他版本，包括盲文、录音带或另一种语言的译本。

Mangyaring hingin kami para sa mga kopya ng polyetong ito sa Braille, sa audio cassette o sa ibang wika.

Confidential Advice Line Link (CALL): Phone: ☎ 01223 699214
10am - 12noon and 2pm - 4pm
Monday to Friday, Term Time only
E-mail: ☰️ pps@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Training, newsletters and website:
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