

Professional Directory



Understanding the professionals supporting your child and family

*A simple guide to who does what,
when they may become involved
and how they can help.*



SUPPORT • NAVIGATE • THRIVE

Parenting
PANDAS

Welcome...



When your child needs additional support, it can feel as though you're suddenly expected to understand a whole new world of professionals, services and acronyms.

It can feel confusing.

It can feel overwhelming.

This guide has been created to help you understand who different professionals are, what they do and how they may support your child and family.

You don't need to remember everything.

Come back whenever you need it.

Quick Directory



Education

SENCO

Class Teacher

Teaching Assistant

Headteacher

Attendance Officer

Educational Psychologist

Health

GP

School Nurse

Paediatrician

Occupational Therapist

Speech & Language

Therapist

SEND

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Local Offer

SEND Team

EHCP Case Officer

Family Support

Family Help

Social Worker

Family Hub

Class Teacher



? What is a Class Teacher?

A **Class Teacher** is responsible for your child's day-to-day learning, wellbeing and progress at school. They are usually your first point of contact.

They may help with...

- ✓ Monitoring learning and progress.
- ✓ Making classroom adjustments.
- ✓ Raising concerns about additional needs.
- ✓ Working with the SENCO and parents.

They don't...

- ✗ Diagnose additional needs.
- ✗ Decide on EHCPs or funding.
- ✗ Carry out specialist assessments.



You might speak to a Class Teacher if...

Your child is struggling in school, you've noticed changes in behaviour or learning, or you'd like to discuss strategies that may help in the classroom



Panda Tip

Keep communication open—small conversations often prevent bigger problems.

SENCO



? What is a SENCO?

A **SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator)** oversees and coordinates additional support within school to help children with SEND access learning and thrive.

They may help with...

- ✓ Coordinating support in school
- ✓ Creating or reviewing support plans
- ✓ Making referrals
- ✓ Collecting evidence for an EHCP
- ✓ Working with outside professionals

They don't...

- ✗ Diagnose autism or ADHD
- ✗ Decide whether your child receives an EHCP
- ✗ Replace classroom teachers



You might speak to a SENCO if...

Your child is struggling with learning, emotional wellbeing, sensory differences, attendance or accessing school.



Panda Tip

The SENCO is often your first point of contact when discussing additional support in school.

Teaching Assistant (TA)



? What is a Teaching Assistant?

A **Teaching Assistant (TA)** supports children in the classroom and helps them access learning. They work under the direction of the class teacher.

They may help with...

- ✓ Supporting learning.
- ✓ Explaining instructions.
- ✓ Encouraging independence.
- ✓ Helping with regulation strategies.

They don't...

- ✗ Replace the class teacher.
- ✗ Diagnose additional needs.
- ✗ Decide on EHCPs or funding.



You might speak to a Teaching Assistant if...

They work closely with your child and you'd like to understand how they're managing during the school day.



Panda Tip

Teaching assistants often notice the little things that make a big difference.

Inclusion Lead



? What is an Inclusion Lead?

An **Inclusion Lead** helps ensure all children can access education and receive the support they need. In some schools, this role is carried out by the SENCO.

They may help with...

- ✓ Promoting inclusion.
- ✓ Advising school staff.
- ✓ Coordinating additional support.
- ✓ Working with families and professionals.

They don't...

- ✗ Diagnose additional needs.
- ✗ Decide on EHCP funding.
- ✗ Replace the class teacher or SENCO.



You might speak to an Inclusion Lead if...

Your child needs additional support or you feel further adjustments are needed in school.



Panda Tip

Good inclusion means adapting the environment—not expecting the child to adapt alone.

Headteacher



? What is a Headteacher?

A **Headteacher** leads the school and oversees its day-to-day running, including education, safeguarding and wellbeing.

They may help with...

- ✓ Resolving ongoing concerns.
- ✓ Overseeing school policies.
- ✓ Supporting complex situations.
- ✓ Making whole-school decisions.

They don't...

- ✗ Diagnose additional needs.
- ✗ Carry out specialist assessments.
- ✗ Replace the SENCO or class teacher.



You might speak to a Headteacher if...

You've already raised concerns with school but need further support or a decision from senior leadership.



Panda Tip

Start with your child's teacher or SENCO whenever possible before escalating concerns.

Attendance Officer



? What is an Attendance Officer ?

An **Attendance Officer** works with schools and families to understand and improve school attendance.

They may help with...

- ✓ Exploring attendance concerns.
- ✓ Developing attendance plans.
- ✓ Signposting support services.
- ✓ Working alongside families.

They don't...

- ✗ Diagnose anxiety or additional needs.
- ✗ Replace school support.
- ✗ Force a child to attend school.



You might speak to an Attendance Officer if...

Your child is struggling to attend school or attendance has become a concern.



Panda Tip

Understanding why a child can't attend is just as important as improving attendance.

Educational Psychologist



? What is an Educational Psychologist?

An **Educational Psychologist (EP)** helps schools and families understand how a child learns and what support may help them thrive.

They may help with...

- ✓ Assessing learning needs.
- ✓ Observing your child.
- ✓ Recommending support strategies.
- ✓ Contributing to EHCP assessments.

They don't...

- ✗ Diagnose autism or ADHD.
- ✗ Decide if an EHCP is issued.
- ✗ Provide ongoing therapy.



You might speak to an Educational Psychologist if...

School needs specialist advice or your child's needs are becoming more complex.



Panda Tip

An EP report should identify your child's strengths as well as the support they need.

Health Professionals



Health Professionals

Understanding the healthcare professionals who may support your child's development, health and wellbeing.

Health professionals support your child's physical, developmental and emotional health. They may work in hospitals, clinics, schools or within the community.

GP (General Practitioner)



? What is a GP?

A **GP** is your child's family doctor and is often the first healthcare professional you contact if you have concerns.

They may help with...

- ✓ General health concerns.
- ✓ Referring to specialist services.
- ✓ Prescribing medication.
- ✓ Monitoring ongoing health conditions.

They don't...

- ✗ Carry out specialist assessments.
- ✗ Provide long-term therapy.
- ✗ Decide on EHCPs.



You might speak to a GP if...

You have concerns about your child's physical, emotional or developmental health and feel they may need further support.



Panda Tip

If you're worried, trust your instincts and book an appointment.

Community Paediatrician



? What is a Community Paediatrician?

A **Community Paediatrician** assesses children's development, behaviour and health, particularly where additional needs are suspected.

They may help with...

- ✓ Assessing development.
- ✓ Referring for further assessments.
- ✓ Diagnosing some developmental conditions.
- ✓ Coordinating medical care.

They don't...

- ✗ Provide ongoing therapy.
- ✗ Decide on school support.
- ✗ Replace your GP.



You might speak to a Community Paediatrician if...

Your child has developmental differences or needs further assessment.



Panda Tip

Take notes before appointments—it's easy to forget important examples.

Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT)



? What is a Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT)?

A Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT) supports children with speech, language and communication needs.

They may help with...

- ✓ Speech difficulties.
- ✓ Understanding language.
- ✓ Communication skills.
- ✓ Social communication.

They don't...

- ✗ Diagnose autism alone.
- ✗ Replace school support.
- ✗ Decide on EHCPs.



You might speak to a SaLT if...

Your child finds it difficult to communicate, understand language or express themselves.



Panda Tip

Communication includes much more than talking.

Occupational Therapist (OT)



? What is a Occupational Therapist (OT)?

An **Occupational Therapist (OT)** helps children develop the skills they need for everyday life.

They may help with...

- ✓ Sensory processing.
- ✓ Fine motor skills.
- ✓ Self-care skills.
- ✓ Equipment recommendations.

They don't...

- ✗ Diagnose autism alone.
- ✗ Replace physiotherapy.
- ✗ Decide on EHCPs.



You might speak to an Occupational Therapist if...

Your child struggles with sensory needs, dressing, handwriting or everyday tasks.



Panda Tip

OTs look at what makes everyday life easier—not just what's difficult.

Physiotherapist



? What is a Physiotherapist?

A **Physiotherapist** helps children improve movement, strength, balance and physical function.

They may help with...

- ✓ Gross motor skills.
- ✓ Mobility.
- ✓ Strength and coordination.
- ✓ Exercise programmes.

They don't...

- ✗ Support sensory processing.
- ✗ Diagnose developmental conditions.
- ✗ Replace Occupational Therapy.



You might speak to a Physiotherapist if...

Your child has difficulties with movement, balance, coordination or physical development.



Panda Tip

Small improvements in movement can make a big difference to daily life.

School Nurse



? What is a School Nurse?

A **School Nurse** supports children's physical and emotional health while they are at school.

They may help with...

- ✓ Health advice.
- ✓ Medical care plans.
- ✓ Continence support.
- ✓ Emotional wellbeing.

They don't...

- ✗ Diagnose conditions.
- ✗ Replace your GP.
- ✗ Provide specialist therapy.



You might speak to a School Nurse if...

Your child has a health need that affects them during the school day.



Panda Tip

School Nurses can often bridge the gap between education and healthcare.

SEND & Specialist Support



SEND & Specialist Support

Understanding the services that provide specialist advice, assessments and support for children with additional needs.



SENDIASS



What is SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs?

SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service) offers free, impartial information and advice about SEND, education and EHCPs.

They may help with...

- ✓ Explaining your rights.
- ✓ EHCP advice.
- ✓ School meetings.
- ✓ SEND processes.

They don't...

- ✗ Make decisions for the Local Authority.
- ✗ Provide legal representation.
- ✗ Replace your child's school.



You might speak to SENDIASS if...

You need independent advice about SEND support, school concerns or the EHCP process.



Panda Tip

You don't have to navigate the SEND system alone.

Local Offer



? What is the Local Offer

The **Local Offer** is your Local Authority's website, bringing together information about services, support, education, health, activities and advice for children and young people with SEND in your area.

They may help with...

- ✓ Finding local services.
- ✓ Understanding SEND support.
- ✓ Learning about EHCPs.
- ✓ Discovering clubs and activities.
- ✓ Accessing parent information.

They don't...

- ✗ Replace professional advice.
- ✗ Make decisions about support.
- ✗ Provide assessments.



You might use the Local Offer if..

You're looking for information about SEND services, support or activities available in your local area.



Panda Tip

Every Local Authority has its own Local Offer—it's worth bookmarking yours.

EHCP Case Officer



? What is an EHCP Case Officer ?

An **EHCP Case Officer** manages your child's Education, Health and Care Plan on behalf of the Local Authority..

They may help with...

- ✓ Managing EHCP paperwork.
- ✓ Coordinating the assessment process.
- ✓ Arranging annual reviews.
- ✓ Answering questions about your EHCP.

They don't...

- ✗ Assess your child directly.
- ✗ Decide what professionals recommend.
- ✗ Deliver support in school.



You might speak to a an EHCP Case Officer if...

You have questions about your child's EHCP, assessment or annual review.



Panda Tip

Keep copies of letters and emails—they're invaluable later.

Autism Outreach Service



? What is an Autism Outreach Service?

An **Autism Outreach Service** provides advice to schools on supporting autistic pupils and making reasonable adjustments.

They may help with...

- ✓ Classroom strategies.
- ✓ Staff training.
- ✓ Environmental adjustments.
- ✓ Advice for schools

They don't...

- ✗ Diagnose autism.
- ✗ Replace school staff.
- ✗ Provide long-term therapy



You might speak to an Autism Outreach Service if...

School needs specialist advice to better support your autistic child.



Panda Tip

Supporting the environment often supports the child.

Specialist Teaching Service



? What is an Specialist Teacher?

A **Specialist Teacher** works with schools to help children with additional learning needs access education..

They may help with...

- ✓ Assessing learning needs.
- ✓ Classroom strategies.
- ✓ Specialist advice.
- ✓ Staff support.

They don't...

- ✗ Diagnose conditions.
- ✗ Replace the class teacher.
- ✗ Decide on EHCPs.



You might speak to a Specialist Teacher if...

School would benefit from specialist advice to support your child's learning.



Panda Tip

Specialist advice works best when it's used consistently in school.

Neurodevelopmental Assessment Team



? What is a Neurodevelopmental Assessment Team?

A **Neurodevelopmental Assessment Team** assesses children where autism, ADHD or other neurodevelopmental differences are being considered.

They may help with...

- ✓ Developmental assessments.
- ✓ Autism assessments.
- ✓ ADHD assessments.
- ✓ Referrals to other services.

They don't...

- ✗ Provide ongoing support.
- ✗ Replace school services.
- ✗ Deliver daily interventions.



You might speak to a Neurodevelopmental Team if...

Your child has been referred for an autism or ADHD assessment.



Panda Tip

Assessment is the beginning of understanding—not the end of the journey.

Specialist Education Facility (SEF)



? What is a Specialist Education Facility (SEF)?

A **Specialist Education Facility (SEF)** is a specialist provision within a mainstream school that supports pupils with higher levels of additional need.

They may help with...

- ✓ Specialist teaching.
- ✓ Smaller learning environments.
- ✓ Individual support.
- ✓ Transition planning.

They don't...

- ✗ Replace mainstream education entirely.
- ✗ Provide medical services.
- ✗ Guarantee an EHCP.



You might speak to a Specialist Education Facility if...

Your child's needs require more support than can usually be provided in a mainstream classroom.



Panda Tip

The right environment can make a huge difference to a child's confidence and wellbeing.

Family Support



Family Support

Understanding the services that can support your child, your family and life at home.



Family Help



? What is Family Help?

Family Help supports families who would benefit from extra help before problems become more difficult. Support is voluntary and focuses on working together with families.

They may help with...

- ✓ Parenting support.
- ✓ School attendance.
- ✓ Emotional wellbeing.
- ✓ Coordinating support.

They don't...

- ✗ Remove children from their families.
- ✗ Make court decisions.
- ✗ Replace specialist services.



You might speak to Family Help if...

Your family would benefit from extra support at home, with school, or coordinating services.



Panda Tip

Accepting support is a strength, not a failure.

Family Hub



? What is a Family Hub?

A **Family Hub** is a local service offering advice, activities and support for children, young people and families.

They may help with...

- ✓ Parenting courses.
- ✓ Stay and play sessions.
- ✓ Youth activities.
- ✓ Information and advice.

They don't...

- ✗ Carry out statutory assessments.
- ✗ Replace Children's Services.
- ✗ Provide specialist therapy.



You might speak to a Family Hub if...

You're looking for local support, activities or advice for your family.



Panda Tip

Family Hubs are a great place to find support before problems grow bigger.

Social Worker



? What is a Social Worker?

A **Social Worker** supports children and families where there are safeguarding concerns or more complex needs. Their role is to help keep children safe and support positive outcomes.

They may help with...

- ✓ Safeguarding children.
- ✓ Assessing family needs.
- ✓ Coordinating support plans.
- ✓ Working with other professionals.

They don't...

- ✗ Remove children simply because a family asks for help.
- ✗ Work against families.
- ✗ Replace universal services.



You might speak to a Social Worker if...

Children's Services are involved with your family or an assessment has been completed.



Panda Tip

Asking questions and understanding the process can help you feel more confident.

Understanding Annual Reviews



? What is an Annual Review?

An **Annual Review** is a meeting to look at whether your child's EHCP is still meeting their needs and whether anything needs to change.

Before the meeting...

- ✓ Read the reports.
- ✓ Write down your concerns.
- ✓ Think about what's working well.
- ✓ Ask if you'd like reports in advance.

During the meeting...

- ✓ Share your views.
- ✓ Ask questions.
- ✓ Discuss what's changed.
- ✓ Agree next steps.



After the meeting...

The Local Authority considers the recommendations. They'll decide whether to maintain, amend or cease the EHCP. You'll be told what happens next.



Panda Tip

You are an equal member of the review team—your views matter.

Before your First Meeting



A quick checklist

- ☐ Read any reports before the meeting.
- ☐ Write down your questions.
- ☐ Take notes or ask someone to come with you.
- ☐ Ask if you don't understand something.
- ☐ Don't be afraid to ask professionals to explain acronyms.
- ☐ It's okay to ask for time to think before making a decision.
- ☐ Remember that you are an equal member of the team.
- ☐ Celebrate what's going well, as well as discussing concerns.

You're Not Alone



Navigating services can feel overwhelming, but you don't have to know everything at once. Every question you ask, every meeting you attend and every step you take is helping you advocate for your child.

Remember—you are the expert on your child, and your voice matters.



You are not alone in this

Small changes, made with understanding and consistency, can make a big difference

