

The Local Offer

The Local Offer should be, collaborative ...
accessible ... comprehensive ... up to date ...
transparent.¹



What does the Code say²?

The Local Offer sets out, in one place, information about Education, Health and Social Care provision a Local Authority expects to be available for children and young people in their area with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND). Every Local Authority has a duty to publish, maintain and update their Local Offer. It must be published on a website and be accessible both to those who do not have access to the internet and to those with different types of SEND.

The Local Offer:

- Should provide details on the range of services available, across universal, targeted and specialist services.
- Should include services for children and young people with SEND who may receive assistance in early years settings or school through Special Educational Needs (SEN) support, those who have an Education Health and Care plan and those currently without a diagnosis.
- Is particularly important for children and young people with SEND but who don't have an EHC plan. While having an EHC plan creates access to a range of services, a system of review and a mechanism for action if the services specified in the plan are not delivered, this is not the case for those without a plan, so the Local Offer is the only place where services available to them will be set out.
- Must also include information on provision outside of the local area, if it is likely to be used by children and young people the Local Authority has responsibility for.
- Should provide information on services such as:
 - Therapies e.g. Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy
 - Child, Adolescent and Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
 - Those assisting educational provisions to support children and young people with medical conditions.
- Should also include highly specialist services commissioned centrally by NHS England such as securing alternative communication systems.

The Local Offer must also:

- Be promoted to children and young people with SEND and their families and the information should be easy to understand, and jargon free.
- Involve parents, children and young people in its development. The Local Authority has a duty to consult with users in reviewing what is currently available in the local area. This could mean the use of Parent Carer Forums or focus groups.
- Give details on how services can be accessed and any admission or eligibility criteria.
- Give details on how to access information, advice and support.
- Say how to complain about provision or appeal against decisions.

For schools, each school must publish their SEN Information Report on their school website, and this information feeds into the Local Offer from the Local Authority. This is not the case for early years providers or FE provision.

Additionally the Local Offer

- Builds on the requirements for Local Authorities and Health services to complete Joint Strategic Needs Assessments for their areas of responsibility, and should reflect the service options arising from the Joint Commissioning Arrangements (JCA). For more information on [joint commissioning](#), please read the section on this.
 - Should also set out how services will meet the identified local need and achieve the outcomes set out by the JCA. In this way, the Local Offer is envisaged as a useful tool to assist with the monitoring and improvement of provision.
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What are the Key Issues for SLCN?

- Children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) can easily fall through the gaps in provision. Many will not have their needs identified or their needs may be wrongly labelled.
- Even for children and young people where a communication need is identified, there may be many who will not be eligible for EHC plans. For those without an EHC plan access to a quality Local Offer will be imperative.
- Although SLCN is the most common SEN, it is a broad term and we know that families can struggle to find the right information and support. As discussed in the [introduction](#), SLCN can be missed, misinterpreted or misunderstood.
- SLCN is an umbrella term and the diversity of different types of SLCN can make it hard for families to find the specific support that they need. It is important that each family is able to find support that is right for their child, even if that is through a smaller specialist organisation.
- The Local Offer should contain information on a range of services appropriate for children and young people with SLCN. Families will be expecting services to be joined up, as part of one Local Offer. Although there is an emphasis with EHC plans on joined up working, it will be important that this is experienced by all children and young people with SLCN, whether they have an EHC plan or not.
- There are challenges in ensuring information is clear and accessible both to children and young people with SLCN, many of whom will also have associated difficulties with literacy, and their parents.
- There are clearly challenges in engaging the views of children and young people with SLCN, and in expressing their views in influencing local changes and may be even more difficult at this more strategic level. This is discussed more in the section on [children and young people at the centre](#).

Research snapshot...

20.6% of pupils with SEN in primary, secondary and special schools have SLCN as their primary need, making it the most prevalent of all SEN; in primary schools this figure is 31.6% (DfE SEN in England, 2014 statistics).



What are the key strategies for SLCN?

- The Communication Trust has developed an online resource which sets out 10 key principles for seeing how a Local Offer addresses the key issues for children and young people with SLCN. It also provides links to resources that Local Authorities can add to their Local Offer which will help meet these principles. These resources can be found at: www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/localoffer and www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/localofferreadme
- The 10 principles are derived from the findings of the most recent review into the needs of children with SLCN (The Bercow Review), and draws on experiences from the categorisation of services for disabled children by other organisations.

A little more about...

The Bercow Review was commissioned by the Government in September 2007 and aimed to improve services for children and young people from birth to 19 who have speech, language and communications difficulties. It is now in common use, including informing the Code of Practice.

10 principles of a Local Offer in relation to SLCN:

A Local Offer should:

1. Enable families to easily locate what universal services are available for children and young people with SLCN.
 2. Enable families to easily locate what targeted services are available for children and young people with SLCN.
 3. Enable families to easily locate what specialist services are available for children and young people with SLCN and whether these services are available to be purchased if the family is in receipt of a personal budget.
 4. Enable families to easily locate what other resources are available or accessible within the community which may be of assistance to children and young people with SLCN, but are not funded by either the local statutory services or by personal budgets.
 5. Enable parents, young people and children with SLCN to engage with the local authority and local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) as they commission services.
- A good Local Offer for children and young people with Speech, Language & Communication Needs (SLCN) will include:**
6. Speech, Language and Communication as a major topic within the Local Offer, which is easily found by families.
 7. A comprehensive section for families who are concerned about their child's speech, language or communication.
 8. A comprehensive offer of early intervention available for children and young people with SLCN.
 9. A description as to how services will work together jointly for children and young people with SLCN.
 10. Quality resources that are consistent across the Local Authority and can be accessed equally by families across the Local Authority.

What does success look like?



- Families who have children with SLCN can turn to their Local Offer and find a comprehensive set of information about the services that are available to their child which will enable them to start the journey towards having their needs correctly identified.
- Through the Local Offer a family with a child with SLCN can decide whether they want an EHC assessment and apply for it.
- The Local Offer enables families to find and access universal services that they experience as being inclusive of their child.
- The Local Offer enables families to find targeted support that their child may need, whether they have an EHC plan or not.
- Through the Local Offer families are able to access specialist services where appropriate, and those with low incidence need will find the specialist support they require, even if it is only available from a national or regional organisation.
- Families experience services as being joined up working together holistically, whether they have an EHC plan or not.
- Families feel that they can input into the development of the Local Offer and the commissioning of services that support it.



References



1. SEND Code of Practice section 4.2
2. SEND Code of practice Chapter 4



There is a wide range of other guidance available to help practitioners deliver the Reforms which Communicating the Code seeks to add to rather than duplicate. Follow [this link](#) to find additional resources and support and [this link](#) to see examples of good practice and case studies relating to the Code of Practice.

This document can also be downloaded from our website at www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk
