

# EARLY YEARS SUPPORT

The term 'Early Years' refers to children aged from birth to five years old. Though both Family Centres and A Better Start Southend support throughout pregnancy as well.

In terms of support, this includes;

- ▶ Health Visitors
- ▶ Specialist Health Visitors
- ▶ Early Years SEND Team
- ▶ Family Centres
- ▶ Early Years Outreach Team
- ▶ A Better Start Southend
- ▶ Nurseries, Pre-Schools, and Childminders.

This section will look at what they are, how they can give both your child and your family support, and how to access them.

## Health Visitors

A Health Visitor's role is to support the health and well-being of families and children under the age of five.

The Health Visitor Team hold weekly drop-in clinics at the Southend Family Centres, where they are available for you to ask them questions and for them to weigh and measure your child.

They can also help you speak to nurseries, playschools, and professionals about your child, ensure that all of the necessary information is given, and help ensure that your child receives any additional support they need.

They are your first port of call for health or development concerns with your young child and perform two growth and development assessments; one when your child is 18 months old and another when they are two and a half years old. This is to check that your child is not delayed or struggling in any area where they may need some additional support or if they need to be referred for further health assessments.

If you have any concerns about your child's growth or development, contact your Health Visitor. They are highly trained, experienced, and knowledgeable about child development, what the expected development stage is for your child's age, and whether their delay or struggle is something that needs to be looked into further.

If, after a development assessment, they feel that your child may have Special Educational Needs or a Disability, they may refer you to the Specialist Health Visitor, who supports families and children with SEND needs.

## Specialist Health Visitors

Specialist Health Visitors work alongside the paediatricians, education, social care, voluntary services, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, health visitors and occupational therapy services. They support families with children with additional needs, ensuring that everything is in place and making appropriate referrals to support services. They also help families through the assessment pathway for Autism.

The specialist Health Visitor manages the Development and Play Advisors Team (often referred to as Jigsaws). If you are assigned a Development and Play Advisor, they will visit you and your child at home, learning about your child's needs and what development areas they currently struggle with. They will create a bespoke plan for your child, with a set number of sessions and outcomes that they will be working towards, based on your child's needs and development levels. They will advise you on how to support your child, so they can reach their best potential and advise how to manage behaviours you may be experiencing.

They will come to your home for the sessions, bringing different toys and activities to play with your child to help develop the areas they require further support and guidance with. Along with another trained colleague, the Specialist Health Visitor runs a Sleep Scotland support clinic for families whose children have sleep difficulties. If you are referred for this service, a sleep specialist will visit your home or offer online face to face meetings over Microsoft teams. A full assessment will be completed, and then ongoing support around sleep difficulties will continue as needed.

## Early Years (EY) SEND Team

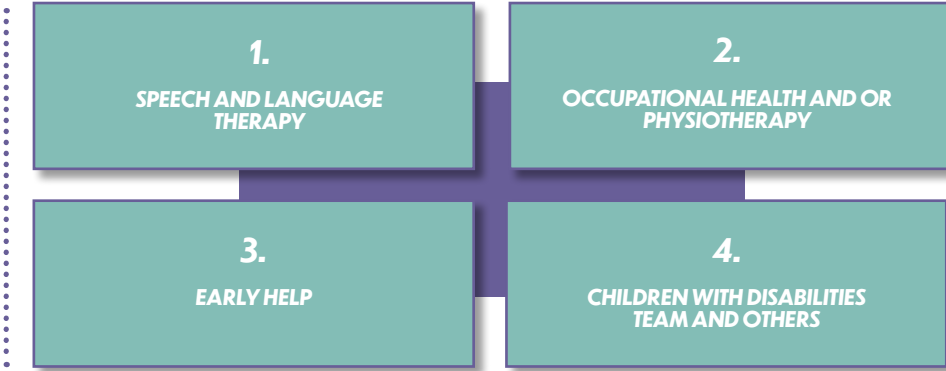
The Early Years SEND Team works with both education childcare providers (nurseries, pre-schools, etc.) and families to support them to meet the individual child's needs.

Suppose the EY SEND Team is notified by either a health professional or the education setting. In that case, a multi-agency panel will look at your referral and will discuss and identify the most appropriate level of support for your child and family's individual needs, either at home or in your child's educational setting. A member of the EY SEND Team will call you and discuss the outcome of the EY Panel and the next steps.

If a package of support is required for your child and family, you will be allocated an Early Years SEND Support Worker who may provide the following;

- ▶ Observations within a setting or the home to provide advice and recommendations to parents and setting to support the child's development
- ▶ A support plan that consists of blocks of support in the home or setting (frequency agreed with parent and/or setting)
- ▶ Providing advice and recommendations, including modelling strategies, to Nursery staff where support in the setting is required
- ▶ Participation at regular Team around the Child reviews to facilitate discussion around a child's progress and needs
- ▶ Providing Transition support from home to setting and setting to school. This can include attendance at transition meetings and a block of transition support from a Support Worker in the setting if required
- ▶ Supporting settings to write, implement and review Individual Support Plans (ISPs).

- ▶ Providing Bespoke training for settings to meet the individual needs of the child.
- ▶ Advising settings on how to make referrals to other services. This may include:



- ▶ Explaining to settings the funding that is available to children and how to apply for these. This includes the Disability Access Fund (DAF) and Inclusion Funding
- ▶ Providing guidance and support to settings and parents with the EHC Needs Assessment process. This may include helping with completing paperwork, explaining the process, attending co-production meetings and more
- ▶ Providing guidance and training for settings on how to conduct annual reviews of EHC Plans
- ▶ Supported visits for parents to view settings where appropriate.

All blocks of support are regularly reviewed. Further blocks of support can be considered if required. The EY SEND Team also hold fortnightly Play and Development group sessions in Family Centres. Sessions alternate between Stay and Play sessions which provide opportunities for families and children with SEND to socialise, enjoy messy, sensory, or development play, and talk to EY SEND Team staff, and sessions led by the Speech and Language Service, Educational Psychologist, Occupational Therapy/Physiotherapy, The Play and Development Team. Following these professional's sessions, there will be opportunities for you to try out some of the advice with your child, with the benefit of having them on hand to help guide you.

The HI Team hold weekly HICCUPS group sessions in Summercourt Family Centre. These are Stay and Play sessions led by the Teachers of the Deaf and a Signing instructors or support workers for children with hearing impairment. These are very similar to the Play and Development group sessions but are for children with hearing difficulties.

The SEAS course that the Early Years SEND Team runs, in conjunction with other professionals, is for parents of children who are either diagnosed as Autistic or are on the Under 5's Autism Pathway. This series of sessions cover different aspects of Autism; characteristics, professional support, therapies, services, and how to support an autistic child at home. It provides a wealth of knowledge and advice for parents and carers who may be new to the Autistic journey.

## Family Centres

There are nine Family Centres in the Southend borough(see map). These used to be known as Children's Centres.



### **Friars Family Centre**

Friars Primary School, Constable Way, Shoeburyness, Southend on Sea, Essex, SS4 9XX

### **Centre Place Family Centre**

Centre Place, Prospect Close, Southend on Sea, Essex, SS1 2JD

### **Hamstel Family Centre**

Hamstel Infant School, Hamstel Road, Southend on Sea, Essex, SS2 4PQ

### **Cambridge Road Family Centre**

40-42 Cambridge Road, Westcliff on Sea, Essex, SS1 1EB

### **Summercourt Family Centre**

Milton Hall Primary School, Summercourt Road, Westcliff on Sea, Essex, SS0 7AU

### **Prince Avenue Family Centre**

Primary Foundation School and Nursery, Hornby Avenue, Westcliff on Sea, SS0 0LG

### **Blenheim Family Centre**

Blenheim Chase, Leigh on Sea, Essex, SS9 4HX

### **Eastwood Family Centre**

Eastwood Primary School, Fours Sisters Way, Rayleigh Road, Eastwood, Leigh on Sea, Essex, SS9 5UT

### **Temple Sutton Family Centre**

Eastern Avenue, Southend on Sea, Essex, SS2 4BA (services delivered from St Luke's Church Hall, St Luke's Road, Southend on Sea, Essex, SS2 4AB)

All of the Family Centres offer the same services and support. They are community based centres that run various classes, drop-in groups, clinics, and play sessions. When you have a child with additional needs, some parents and carers can feel quite isolated. They are limited to where they can take their child without being segregated or judged, especially if their child's behaviour is different from their peers.

Family Centre staff ensure that all the groups, clubs, and clinics are welcoming to everyone and can find support if they need it, whether you drop into a Centre or phone for advice.

Examples of some of the sessions, groups, and clinics that are run in the Family Centres are as follows;

- ▶ Messy Play & Stay and Play
- ▶ Young carers group
- ▶ Health visitor clinic
- ▶ SEN sensory playgroup
- ▶ SEND Early Years play & development group
- ▶ Baby massage
- ▶ Cooking with your child
- ▶ Understanding your child's behaviour course
- ▶ HICCUPS group.

To contact the Family Centres;

Email: [familycentres@southend.gov.uk](mailto:familycentres@southend.gov.uk)

Telephone: 01702 220810

### Early Years Outreach Team

The Outreach service is part of Southend Council's Early Years department.

The Early Years Outreach Team provide the information families need to make informed choices about early years and childcare.

#### We can help parents to find out about:

- ▶ FREE 15 hours early education a week for all three and four-year-old children
- ▶ FREE 30 hours early education a week for three and four-year-old children for working parents
- ▶ FREE 15 hours early education a week for two-year-old children whose parents are eligible
- ▶ How to find a childcare provider on [www.livewellsouthend.com](http://www.livewellsouthend.com)
- ▶ All childcare options
- ▶ What help parents can get with childcare costs.

#### They can also provide a brokerage service offering:

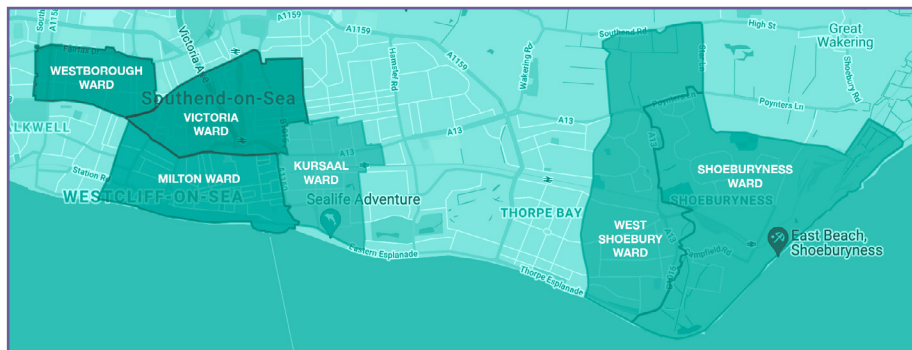
- ▶ Detailed searches of childcare providers in the area parents need
- ▶ Extra help to families who are struggling to find childcare that meets their needs.

If you need support to find childcare for you can contact us for advice at:

[earlyyears@southend.gov.uk](mailto:earlyyears@southend.gov.uk)

## A Better Start Southend

A Better Start is a community project commissioner (an organisation that arranges and funds community projects) for the six wards in Southend that primarily house the most families with low incomes.



To find out if your address falls into one of these wards, please go to their webpage:

<https://abetterstartsouthend.co.uk/locations/>

These services are for families of children up to the day of their fourth birthday and focus on the following development areas;

- ▶ Social and emotional
- ▶ Communication and language
- ▶ Diet and Nutrition.

Examples of some of their current projects are;

- ▶ **Families Growing Together** – enjoy family time and get a boost through gardening activities at community gardening centres in Shoeburyness and Westcliff
- ▶ **Family Support Workers for Social Communication Needs** – community-based peer-support speech, language and communication intervention
- ▶ **HENRY** – Helping the whole family develop a healthier and more active lifestyle
- ▶ **Let's Talk** – fun-packed communication courses helping parents, carers, and young people develop their communication skills
- ▶ **Talking Transitions** – An innovative Speech, Language and Communication project focusing on transitioning children into primary school
- ▶ **Volunteer Home Visiting Service** – be matched with a volunteer to help support your wellbeing, your little one's playtime and much more.

You do not need to be referred to A Better Start to access these services.

Visit A Better Start website to find out more at [www.abetterstartsouthend.co.uk/](http://www.abetterstartsouthend.co.uk/)

Email: [abetterstart@eyalliance.org.uk](mailto:abetterstart@eyalliance.org.uk)

Telephone: 01702 880370

## Nurseries, Pre-schools, and Childminders

Ofsted registered childcare providers include day nurseries, pre-schools, childminders, and school nursery classes. All childcare providers must follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework so that all children can receive high-quality early education.

The average age of children starting nursery, pre-school, or with a childminder is between two and three years old, though some start from as young as two months old.

It can be quite an emotional transition for parents, especially if it is the first time your child will be away from you for a few hours. The anxiety about finding the right childcare provider can be intense, particularly if your child has additional needs and you may not know what steps to take to find it.

## How to find a good childcare provider

There are a lot of childcare providers, including nurseries, Pre-schools and childminders, in the Southend borough, and you may feel that you need some support in finding the right one for you and your child.

Your Health Visitor or the Early SEND Team can support you to speak to nurseries or pre-schools or visit settings with you.

The Early Years Outreach Team can also help you find the right childcare provider for your child. They can also help and support in applying for funding to help pay for your child's place (this is explained more deeply later in this section).

If you have access to the internet, the OFSTED website can be a valuable tool. If the childcare provider you are looking at is registered with OFSTED, you will be able to access detailed reports about the setting, including their SEND provisions.

The Southend Local Offer is also beneficial when you are looking at childcare providers. It includes details of local childcare, often with links to their websites so that you can look in-depth at them.

## What is the benefit of sending my child to Pre-school childcare?

- ▶ Your child will gain a level of independence and will feel less anxious when leaving you
- ▶ Your child will gain essential social skills by playing with their peers
- ▶ Your child will be taught skills and support to prepare them for school and to help make the transition go smoothly
- ▶ If your child has SEND needs, a trained SENCO can identify your child's needs, support those needs, and help you access any additional support that your child and family may need.

## How do I pay for nursery or pre-school?

Childcare costs can be expensive. Thankfully, there are several different funding opportunities through the Government for two to four-year-olds that can significantly help with those costs or pay for the childcare completely. These funding opportunities have criteria that your family needs to meet to gain the funding, but please go to the following website and read more about them;

[www.livewellsouthend.com/kb5/southendonsea/directory/family.page?familychannel=1](http://www.livewellsouthend.com/kb5/southendonsea/directory/family.page?familychannel=1)

Another great Government website to go to is: [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/)

They clearly explain each of the funding opportunities and explain how to apply for them.

If you do not have access to the internet, the following funding is available;

## Free Early Years education and childcare for two-year-olds

Some two-year-olds can get up to 15 hours of free childcare a week for 38 weeks. The maximum each year is 570 hours.

You can get free childcare from the term after your child's 2nd birthday, as long as you meet the eligibility criteria and you have been receiving one of the qualifying forms of benefit support.

### Your two year old can also get free childcare if they:

- ▶ Are looked after by a local authority
- ▶ Have a statement of special education needs (SEN) or an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- ▶ Get Disability Living Allowance
- ▶ Have left care under an adoption order, special guardianship order or a child arrangements order.

### For more information

Text: **'CHILDCARE' TO 88440** (A member of the early years' team will contact you to help)

Email: [earlyyears@southend.gov.uk](mailto:earlyyears@southend.gov.uk)

the Early Years Outreach Team can provide you with further information and can assist you.

## Free Early Years education and childcare for three and four-year-olds

- ▶ All three and four-year-olds are entitled to up to 15 hours of free childcare over 38 weeks. The maximum each year is 570 hours
- ▶ Your child will be eligible from the term after their third birthday
- ▶ Working parents could get an extra 15 hours of free childcare for their three and four year-olds. A total of 1,140 hours per year that you can use flexibly with one or more childcare provider.

For more information, email: [earlyyears@southend.gov.uk](mailto:earlyyears@southend.gov.uk)

The Early Years Outreach Team can provide you with further information and can assist you.

## Tax-free childcare – ages 0-11 years old, or 16 if disabled

- ▶ For working families, including the self-employed, in the UK
- ▶ Earning under £100k and at least £142 per week (equal to 16 hours at the National Minimum or Living Wage) each
- ▶ Who aren't receiving Tax Credits, Universal Credit or childcare vouchers
- ▶ With children aged 0-11 (or 0-16 if disabled)
- ▶ For every £8 you pay into an online account, the Government will add an extra £2, up to £2,000 per child per year.

To see if you can get Tax Free Childcare visit: [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)

## **Tax credits for childcare – ages 0-15 (or 16 if disabled)**

- ▶ For working families in the UK
- ▶ With children under sixteen (or under seventeen if disabled)
- ▶ 70% of childcare costs, up to a cap
- ▶ If you cannot make a new claim for Tax Credits, you may be able to apply for Universal Credit instead.

For more information:

[www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)

## **Universal Credit for childcare – ages 0-16**

- ▶ For working families claiming Universal Credit, in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales
- ▶ With children under 17\*
- ▶ Up to 85% of eligible childcare costs
- ▶ Who are not receiving Tax-Free Childcare

For more information:

[www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)

## **What if my child requires more support than the setting can provide?**

Discuss with the setting a referral to the Early Years SEND Team.

The setting can conduct an Early Help Family Support Assessment to identify any support you or your family need. The setting's Early Years Advisor may advise the setting to request Inclusion Funding as part of this assessment to support them in meeting your child's needs. Settings can also apply for a Disability Access Fund (DAF) if your child meets the criteria. The EY advisor can support the setting with this.

After a period of Assess, Plan, Do, Review, you may decide with the setting that your child is not making appropriate progress with the support in place and that your child needs an Education Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) to provide more detailed information of your child's needs and what support they require to make progress and reach their potential (**Please see the EHCP section of this Guide PAGE 98**). Either the SENCO or yourself can apply for this. The Early Years SEND Team can advise and support you and the setting through the EHCNA process.

## **What SEND support is available in a childcare setting?**

All nurseries and pre-schools have a trained SENCO and Key Workers who will be your first point of contact in the setting. Childminders act as the SENCO for their setting. The Early Years SEND Team can visit the setting, speak to the staff about your child's individual needs, and provide advice and recommendations to enable the setting to meet your child's needs. They will also speak to you about any concerns that you may have.

## What do I do if I think my child may have SEND needs?

Speak to your child's Key Worker and ask if they have any concerns about your child's development or behaviour. Also, speak to your Health Visitor and GP. They will observe your child to see if they need to adapt the level of support they are providing. Your child's setting may decide, along with you, that your child would benefit from an Individual Support Plan (ISP). This will set outcomes, and the steps towards (targets) those outcomes, for your child and the strategies and support that your child needs to meet these steps. The ISP forms part of the Assess, Plan, Do, Review strategy from the SEND Code of Practice - this involves assessing your child's needs, planning the support your child needs based on the assessment, providing (do) the support listed on the plan, and, finally, reviewing your child's progress and whether the level of support and strategies remain appropriate for your child to meet their outcomes. The SENCO and Early Years SEN Team can refer your child to any relevant support or health service if they need further assessments or additional support.

## What would happen if the nursery or pre-school have concerns about my child?

It is very common for parents and carers not to spot any potential SEND need in their child. They have known them and spent a great deal of time with them since birth and may assume that any differences, delays, or behaviour is just part of their personality; it's part of what makes them 'them'.

When your child goes to childcare with a trained SENCO, they may spot things you have not. When this happens, they would speak to you privately and explain their concerns. It is natural for a parent to be defensive if they believe that the SENCO is saying that there is something 'wrong' with their child or may feel like their parenting is being judged. Please be assured that this is not the case.

The SENCOs role is to ensure that every child who may have or does have, Special Educational Needs or Disabilities is getting the individualised support they need. By talking to you about it, they explain that your child has different or additional needs than other children and that they will help you get any and all the support that your family or child may need. It is also natural for some parents to feel guilty or to feel a sense of grief upon hearing that their child may have SEND needs. If you feel this way, you may need to take some time to process that your and your child's life may not be as you have pictured it. With the proper support, all children with a Special Educational Need or Disability can grow, be happy, and thrive. The SENCO may direct you towards services or reading material that may help you understand your child's needs and how you can support them at home.

## What does support look like

Support will be tailor made for each family and will look different for each family. However support available within the New Pathway may include family assessment, 1:1 specialised parenting support, group work via specialist parenting groups, advice and guidance for benefits and work, referrals for young carers, information and signposting for local support groups, such as Little Heroes, 1:1 work and support for all children within a family, multi-agency reviews and referrals to other services or therapies as appropriate.