Sunderland SEN information pack for parents, carers and young people aged 0-25

Additional information is available on the Local Offer on the Sunderland Information Point website which can be accessed in many public venues.
www.sunderlandinformationpoint.co.uk

Produced by Together for Children Sunderland, working on behalf of Sunderland City Council in partnership with:
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ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

This booklet has been designed to assist parents/carers of disabled children and young people and contains general information, advice and guidance around all aspects of support available to children, and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families.

Details of specific services, activities and organisations have not been included as these are available on the Local Offer section of the Sunderland Information Point; however we have included details of some support organisations.

If specific service/organisation information is required, and you do not have access to the internet, Together for Children’s Families Information Service Contact Centre may be able to help. Give them a call on 0191 520 5553 or call into a Sunderland Customer Service Centre:

- Sunderland – 31-32 Fawcett Street, Sunderland SR1 1RE
- Houghton – 74 Newbottle Street, Houghton Le Spring DH4 4AF
- Washington – Independence Square, Washington NE38 7RX

Please ring 0191 520 5555 to check the opening hours of the above centres before you visit.

We will endeavour to keep the information contained in this booklet as up-to-date as possible.

Hyperlinks contained within the booklet

There are a number of hyperlinks used within the booklet to direct people to further information. As most hyperlinks are fairly long and complex, we have not used the full link in the body of the document; however, full hyperlinks are listed in the Useful Links section.

Accessing services

Wherever appropriate, disabled children and young people should be able to use social and leisure activities and support services on the same basis as any other child in Sunderland. Sometimes disabled children and young people may need additional support and where ever possible, this is provided directly through the facility they wish to use, rather than through a separate assessment or using a more specialist service. It is often worth asking what help can be provided for your disabled child or young person.

A number of disabled children and young people have more complex needs and require a range of specialist support to help them live at home with their families and participate in their local communities.
What is the Local Offer?

The Local Offer is a statutory duty that was placed on all Local Authorities by the Children and Families Act 2014. It is a single place of access for information about what services, advice and support is expected to be available in and around our local area, for children and young people from birth to 25 years who have SEN or are disabled, including those who do not have Education, Health and Care plans.

The Local Offer has two key purposes as defined in the SEN Code of Practice 0-25 years 2014:

- to provide clear, comprehensive and accessible information about the available provision and how to access it
- to make provision more responsive to local needs and aspirations by directly involving disabled children and young people and those with SEN and their parents, along with service providers in its development and review.

The information contained within the Local Offer includes services across education, health and social care as well as other areas. On the website, the Local Offer is split into 9 different categories which were agreed in consultation with parents and carers. Some information or services could appear in more than one category.

Schools and Colleges also have a duty in the SEN Code of Practice to publish details of the provision the individual school makes for SEN. These SEN Information Reports must be accessible on the individual school or college’s websites. As such the information held on the Local Offer about each school is brief but will include, wherever possible, a link to their own website.

The Local Offer can be accessed on the Sunderland Information Point website (see the Useful Links section).

If you do not have access to the internet, you can visit your local library or customer service centre and ask to view the Local Offer there. You can request printed copies of any pages by using the Contact Us button at the top of the website – remember to give us your contact details and address. Alternatively you can telephone the Customer Service Network on 0191 520 5553.
Special educational needs (SEN) - what does it mean?

The term ‘Special Educational Needs’ (SEN) describes the needs of children who have a difficulty or disability which makes learning harder for them than other children of the same age. SEN can cover a broad spectrum of difficulty or disability and children may have wider ranging or specific problems. These may relate to physical development, visual or hearing impairment or difficulties related to speech and language communication, behavioural or learning.
EARLY YEARS AND EDUCATION

Some children will have SEN of some kind during their time in education. Often children can be helped to overcome the barriers their difficulties present quickly and easily but some children will need extra help for some or all of their time in education.

Children with special educational needs and/or a disability (SEND) have a right to education on an equal basis with their peers. All settings are required to make provisions to enable children with SEND to achieve.

Every child with a SEND should have their identified needs met as far as possible within a mainstream setting, with access to a broad and balanced curriculum.

All Schools and Early Year’s settings are required to appoint a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) and have a Special Educational Needs Policy and SEN Information Report in place. The SEN Information reports should be available on their website or in the Local Offer details section on their record on the Sunderland Information Point website.

If you have concerns about your child’s progress it is important that you share these concerns with your child’s class teacher or the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo).

What do I do if I am worried that my child has special educational needs?

If you think your child may have SEN that has not been identified by the school or early education setting, you should talk to your child’s key worker, class teacher, Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCo) or to the Head Teacher.

They will be able to tell you about the setting’s policy for SEN, the support and resources that the setting can provide and help available from outside the setting.

If your child has not started school or early education, but you are concerned they may have SEN there are several services that may be able to offer support and advice:

- Health visitor
- Doctor
- Social Worker
- Pre-school or Nursery group
- Portage
- Educational Psychology Service
Early Years & Childcare

There are a range of childcare providers you can choose from. These include:

- Childminders – who operate a childcare business from their home
- Daycare nursery
- Out of school club
- Holiday childcare

Providers of early years and childcare places must have arrangements in place to support children with SEND. Maintained schools, maintained nursery schools and all providers who are funded by the local authority to deliver early education places must have regard to the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. Childcare settings must identify a member of staff to undertake the role of Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo).

How can I choose where is best?

The Ofsted website is a good place to start your search as you can find the latest Ofsted report and grade. You can also find any complaints that have been made about the provider. It would be a good idea to visit different childcare providers with and without your child before making a decision about which type of provider is best for you and your child.

When choosing your childcare provider it might be worth considering:

- the space where your child will be cared for
- the resources your child will have access to – is there a variety?
- will your child be able to explore and have a wide range of play opportunities which will support their development?
- is there an outdoor space for your child to play outside each day?
- how are staff/childminder?
  - Do they play with the children?
  - Are they friendly?
  - How do the staff/childminder interact with the children?
  - How do the staff/childminder interact with your child?
If you have a child with a disability or specific needs, you should also ask about the setting’s previous experience of working with similar needs. For example, how they will support your child, if they have had any specific training and if they work with other professionals involved with your child, for example health visitors or physiotherapists.

**Settling your child in**

Discuss the settling in period with the setting. The length of time will depend on whether your child has been in childcare before and any other experiences they may have had. Childcare settings will normally offer introductory sessions, leading to longer sessions. This will build your child’s confidence and help them become familiar with the new surroundings.

**OFSTED**

The main priority for parents is to know their child is in safe hands. Ofsted registers childcare for children up to eight years old. If childcare runs for more than two hours per day in a premise that is not the child’s home, Ofsted regulate and inspect it.

**Childcare options in Sunderland**

**Childminders**

Childminders look after children in their (the childminder’s) home. They must be registered with Ofsted if they look after children under the age of eight. Childminders are trained and follow the same statutory framework as all other types of early years and childcare providers. Childminders may be able to offer flexibility around shift working patterns or before and after school or nursery and weekends. They offer an extended family environment for children and can also offer long term support as children grow up.

**Daycare nurseries**

Day nurseries provide care for children from birth until they start school. Many are open from early morning until evening, all year round. Qualified staff support children with their development and learning and children are assigned a key person who is a member of staff that you and your child will get to know really well.
Nursery schools and classes

Nursery schools and classes usually take children from the beginning of the term after their third/birthday. Some may also offer free entitlement places for two year olds as well as childcare places for babies and young children just like a daycare nursery. Most nursery classes operate during term time only but some nursery schools are open all year round.

For more details about available childminders, nursery schools and private nurseries offering places in Sunderland go to “Sunderland Information Point” (see the Useful Links section).

Nursery education (age 2-4 years)

Early education for 2 year olds

Some children may be entitled to receive 15 hours free childcare at a nursery, day nursery or childminder starting in the term following their 2nd birthday if:

- the child has an Education, Health and Care Plan
- the child is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance
- the child is Looked After by the Local Authority
- the child has left care through either adoption, special guardianship or residence order
- their parents/carers are in receipt of certain benefits

You must apply for a free early education for 2 year old place. You can either apply online yourself though our Family Portal (see the Useful Links section) or alternatively a setting or childminder of your choice would be able to help you apply.

If you would like more information regarding the free 15 hours of early education you can contact the Families Information Service on 0191 520 5553.

Nursery education for 3 and 4 year olds

Free early education entitlement (15 hours per week) is available to all children aged three and four years old, and children become eligible the term after their third birthday. This is known as Universal Entitlement.

A list of childcare providers in Sunderland can be accessed via the Families Information Service on 0191 520 5553 or by visiting Sunderland Information Point.

To access free early education, please contact the childminder or day nursery of your choice.
30 hours Childcare

In September 2017 the Government introduced the 30 Hours childcare scheme. This means that certain children are able to access an additional 15 hours free childcare.

In order to qualify for these additional hours (extended entitlement), the parents must meet the following criteria:

- Earn or expect to earn the equivalent to 16 hours at National Minimum or Living Wage over the coming three months. This equates to £120 a week (or about £6,000 a year) for each parent over 25 years old or £112.80 a week (or £5,800 a year) for each parent between 21 and 24 years old
- This applies whether you are in paid employment, self-employed or on zero hours contract
- One parent meets the income criteria above and the other is:
  - Unable to work because they are disabled, have caring responsibilities or have been assessed as having limited capability to work
  - On maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave, or if they are on statutory sick leave
- Where you are in a ‘start-up period’ (i.e. newly self-employed) you do not need to demonstrate that you meet the income criteria for 12 months
- If you are a non-European Economic Area (EEA) national; the parent must have recourse to public funds.

Applications for 30 hours childcare scheme need to be carried out via the Childcare Choices website (see the Useful Links section). If you are eligible for these additional hours you will need to speak to your childcare provider to ensure that they can accommodate your childcare requirements.

For more detailed information about 30 hours free childcare visit the Together for Children website (see the Useful Links section).

Disability Access Fund

The Department for Education have introduced a funding measure for early years providers called the Disability Access Fund (DAF), which is to support children with disabilities.

The Disability Access Fund (DAF) will help providers to make reasonable adjustments in their settings, either to support the individual child, or for the benefit of all children attending the setting.
Three and four year olds will be eligible for DAF if they meet the following criteria:

- The child is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and;
- The child attends an early years provider for the funded entitlement

Please Note: Four year olds in primary and infant school reception classes are NOT eligible for DAF funding.

Settings offering places to children who are eligible for DAF funding will be entitled to receive a one-off payment of £615 per child in a 12 month period. The DAF is not based on an hourly rate and is an additional payment.

If the child attends more than one setting only one setting will receive the payment.

The child’s parent will choose which setting will receive the funding.

If a child moves settings within the year the new setting will not be eligible to receive a payment until 12 months after the first payment.

For more information see the DAF Funding information on the Local Offer (see the Useful Links section).

**Inclusion Access Fund**

The Equality Act 2010 applies to all providers of early years services. This ensures that children with disabilities are entitled, wherever possible, to the same provision as other children.

It is estimated that less than 1% of children will need additional support within an early years setting if their needs are to be met. Each provider has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that this provision is made.

Local Authorities throughout the country may choose to provide additional funding for early years settings to help them meet the needs of children with significant and/or complex needs. However, not all Authorities choose to do so.

In Sunderland we recognise that there are some early years settings that could struggle financially to meet the needs of children with significant and/or complex needs and for this reason the Early Years Inclusion Grant was introduced. The grant provides a contribution towards additional support for children. Please note that transient mild to moderate speech and language difficulties should be planned for and supported as part of the norm, through everyday good practice. Grant is unlikely to be provided unless the child also has significant difficulties in other areas.

The ultimate responsibility for making appropriate provision for all children rests with the provider. For more information speak to your childcare provider.
How might my child be identified with special educational needs?

Once an early years practitioner has identified that your child needs extra help and support, a discussion will take place with the SENCo in your child’s school/setting. You should be informed at an early stage and your knowledge and views taken into account in planning any support for your child.

The needs of the child are typically identified through the teacher’s/practitioner’s growing knowledge of that child’s needs. In partnership with you, if it is decided that your child needs support which is additional and different to what is provided, the school/setting may contact external professionals for extra guidance and support.

How will my child’s progress be reviewed?

At nursery/school, your child’s progress should be reviewed regularly by the nursery/school and discussed with you and any other professionals involved with your child. If your child has an SEN Support Plan, this should usually be reviewed every term by your child’s class teacher to monitor what progress is being made and to set new targets for your child.

You and your child should be fully involved and informed during the review process. If your child has an EHC Plan, reviews will be held in the school every term and a formal review should take place at least one a year to discuss how your child’s educational, health and social care needs are being met and whether any change to the level of support being provided is necessary.

Following progress reviews and in partnership with you, it may be decided that your child needs to move forward for a statutory assessment of need. The process for this is outlined on page 17.

Primary and Secondary Education

Primary School education is from the age of 4 to 11. A child would normally start school at the beginning of the academic year (in September) in which they reach their 5th birthday.

A child reaches compulsory school age the term after their fifth birthday. This means that they must then be in education.

You must apply for your child to be admitted to a primary school. Each academic year has an application deadline. See Sunderland’s School Admission details (see the Useful Links section).

Secondary School education is from the age of 11 to 16. Some secondary schools also have a 6th Form which takes young people up to 18.
There are 83 primary schools and 18 secondary schools in Sunderland. Details of all Sunderland schools can either be found on the Local Offer website or the Sunderland School’s Directory (see the Useful Links section).

**Elective Home Education**

The majority of parents choose to educate their children at school, however, some parents decide to make their own arrangements and educate their children at home. This is known as Elective Home Education (EHE).

Home education is a huge commitment and requires dedication, energy and patience and is different from home tuition as the local authority will not provide a tutor or any financial support.

Your reason for choosing EHE should not be influenced by any of the following:

- Avoiding non-attendance issues
- Avoiding an exclusion
- Not expecting your child to achieve satisfactory examination grades at school (GCSE or SATs)

If your child has an Education, Health and Care Plan and attends a special school their name cannot be removed from roll without the agreement of the local authority, as the LA has a duty to maintain the plan and to review it annually. If your child is a pupil at a special school the LA will need to consider whether your education provision is suitable before amending the plan.

For more information about Elective Home Education visit the Sunderland Council website (see the Useful Links section).

**Support in mainstream schools**

The majority of children with special educational needs in Sunderland, including those with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), attend mainstream schools or academies and receive help through the school’s own resources.

Each mainstream school and academy has an amount of money in its own budget called a notional budget which should be used to support its pupils with SEN. It is up to the school how they spend this funding but it should appropriately address the needs of those pupils with SEN. It does not have to be spent on individual children, for example, the school could use it to employ additional teaching assistant support; buy special equipment and resources or arrange training for school staff on SEN.
Every school has a duty to provide information, usually called an SEN Information Report, which explains how they support children with SEN which should be available on their website or by contacting the school directly.

**Special Schools**

Some children may need special educational help that cannot be provided in mainstream schools. This could be provided in a special school. There are currently six special schools in Sunderland. If a child is assessed as needing this level of support, it will be identified during the EHC assessment or review and the relevant special school would then be named within the child’s plan.

**Moving on**

There are lots of things to think about when you or your young person leaves school. To help you (or them) choose what to do next, you might need to think about:

- What career you want to do in the future – some jobs need you to choose certain routes to get into them
- Your predicted grades
- How you want to learn

Within the Education & Training section of the Local Offer you will find what options might be available to you, your child or young person. This will include details of schools, colleges and other educational services including traineeships, apprenticeships and supported internships.

There is also more information that may be of use to you in the Preparing for Adulthood section.
SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND EDUCATION, HEALTH AND CARE (EHC) PLANS

What if my child needs extra support?

Where a child/young person is identified as having SEN, education settings should take action to remove any barriers to learning and put effective special educational needs provision in place. This is known as SEN Support and funding is given to schools and education settings within their existing budgets to help them make this provision.

Each educational setting has a legal duty to provide an ‘SEN Information Report’ on their website which must include the types of SEND provided for; their policies for identifying children/young people with SEND as well as other specific information.

What is SEN Support?

SEN Support should be a 4 part cycle. The 4 stages are: Assess, Plan, Do, Review.

The teacher/practitioner will be expected to carry out assessments to inform their understanding of the barriers to and the gaps in the child or young person’s learning. They are then required to plan how the outcomes of the assessment will be delivered in the school.

Following the intervention the setting will be expected to review the progress made and this cycle should be repeated. In this it is expected that all settings will involve and work in partnership with a range of agencies to support children and young people at SEN Support.

If this 4 part cycle has taken place and has not been able to meet the child’s needs, a request can be made for a Statutory Assessment of SEN Needs. The statutory assessment of SEN needs will inform whether or not a child requires an Education Health and Care Plan.

What is an EHC needs assessment?

An Education, Health and Care needs assessment is carried out by Together for Children and is a detailed investigation, including all professionals involved with the child, to find out exactly what the child’s special educational needs are and what special help the child may need.
A needs assessment is only necessary for those pupils with long-term and complex SEN and if the school or early years setting cannot provide all the help that the child needs from within the resources available to them.

Together for Children, on behalf of Sunderland City Council, will make the decision as to whether a child or young person needs an ‘Education, Health and Care Plan’. The process leading to this decision will take a maximum of 20 weeks and be child/young person and family focussed.

**What is an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan?**

An EHC Plan brings together your child’s education, health and social care needs into a single plan which is a legal document. Your child must have special educational needs to be eligible for a plan.

An EHC Plan will describe the needs of the child or young person, the services to meet those needs and the suitable educational placement. It will be developed in partnership with you and your child or young person and will be carried out within 20 weeks of the assessment.

**Who can ask for an EHC Needs Assessment?**

In most cases the request for an EHC needs assessment will come from a school or education setting, however requests can also be made by:

- the child’s parents (or someone on their behalf)
- the young person themselves, if they are over the age of 16 (or someone on their behalf)
- a designated person acting on behalf the Head Teacher or principal of an early years setting, school or post 16 institution (this should be with the knowledge and agreement of the parent or young person)

**How can I request an EHC Needs Assessment?**

A designated person acting on behalf of a Head Teacher or Principal can ask Together for Children for an EHC assessment to be carried out.

A request would need to be submitted in writing to Together for Children asking for a formal assessment to be carried out. The written request will need to contain information about which agencies are currently involved in working with the child or young person.
Together for Children then has up to 6 weeks to decide whether it intends to carry out an EHC needs assessment and they will ask you and others involved with your child to provide them with information to help them decide – you can collect any reports from those who know your child and any assessments already done to give to Together for Children which will help them make a decision.

**Can I access any support to help me through this process?**

Additional advice and guidance and mediation between families and Together for Children or schools can be accessed from Sunderland SEND Information, Advice and Support (IAS) Service. This service also offers support to children and young people up to the age of 25 themselves.

The confidential support and advice can be in relation to SEND, education or training. Further information about the SEND IAS Service can be found on the [Local Offer](#) (see the Useful Links section).

**What happens if Together for Children decides that an EHC plan is not necessary?**

If, following assessment, Together for Children decides that an EHC plan is not necessary, it must inform the parents or young person, the early years provider, school or post 16 institution currently attended and the health service, and give the reasons for its decision.

This must take place within 16 weeks of the initial request or of the child or young person having been brought to Together for Children’s attention. Together for Children must also tell the parents or young person that they have the right to appeal to the SEND Tribunal against the decision and set out the time limits for appeal, and the availability of parent partnership and disagreement resolution services.

**Can changes be made to an EHC Plan once it is in place?**

Changes to an EHC plan can be considered by Together for Children through an EHC review process. You can request a review of the EHC plan at any time but a plan must be reviewed at least every 12 months.

To review a plan a meeting will be held with you, your child or young person and professionals working with them to discuss progress made towards the outcomes in the plan and the provision to meet these outcomes. The child or young person’s setting will arrange this and will request update information from all those working with the child or young person.
What if I disagree with Together for Children’s decision?

You have the right to challenge the decision made by Together for Children on the following:

- not proceeding with an EHC needs assessment
- the school named in the plan
- not producing an EHC plan
- the special educational needs support included in the plan, or
- if the LA want to cease the plan

Sunderland SENDIAS (see the Useful Links section) also offers free confidential and impartial advice on how to challenge a decision made by Together for Children.

More information about how you can challenge these decisions can be found on the Disagreement Resolution, Mediation and Tribunal services advice and guidance page on the Local Offer (see the Useful Links section).

Complaints Regarding Schools

Most parents and carers have a positive relationship with schools but sometimes things may go wrong. It is important to make your complaint clear and state what you would like to happen. It is best to follow the school’s own complaints procedures which are usually set out in steps:

**Step 1 - Informal Discussion with the School**

It is always useful to talk through your complaint with the person responsible, either by telephone or face to face. The school may request that you make an appointment, as this will ensure they can listen to your concerns fully and allocate an appropriate amount of time. In a primary school the person to contact may be your child’s class teacher. In a secondary school you could contact the form tutor or head of year.

**Step 2 - Formal Complaint to the Head teacher**

You will be asked to confirm the complaint in writing to the head teacher (or chair of governors if the complaint is about the head teacher) and it will be acknowledged in writing. The Head Teacher will then look into the complaint and contact you when it has been investigated.
Step 3 - Complaint to the Governing Body

The next step would be to make a formal complaint to the governing body. You should contact the school’s Chair of Governors by letter and you may wish to send them a copy of your original letter as well as giving a reason for your unhappiness.

Letters should be sent to the Chair of School, c/o Governor Support Team, Civic Centre or email governor@togetherforchildren.org.uk. Alternatively you can send a letter via the school.

Sunderland City Council may be able to consider a complaint which relates to:

- The school curriculum
- Collective worship and religious education and the provision of information required by law
- Appeals about admissions
- Appeals about exclusions
- Appeals about assessments of special educational needs

Complaints regarding adults who work or volunteer with children

The Designated Officer (formerly known as the LADO) manages and oversees allegations against adults who work and volunteer with children.

They ensure that all allegations or concerns about professionals or adults working or volunteering with children are recorded appropriately, monitored and progressed in a timely and confidential way. This is so that children are protected from those that might harm them.

Anybody who has concerns about professionals or volunteers working with children should inform the Designated Officer. The Designated Officer needs to be informed when a person who works with children has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal office against or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicated that he or she would pose a risk of harm if they work regularly or closely with children
The allegation can be:

- In connection with employment, voluntary activity or work placement
- Regarding the individual’s own children
- Related to the community or private life of a partner, family member or other member of their household.

All new referrals must be made during office hours on: 0191 561 3901

Email: lado@sunderland.gcsx.gov.uk
HEALTH

When people talk about Health Services, most people will think about services such as your family doctor (GP) or your local hospital. However, if your child needs extra help and support you may come across other services which are known as Specialist Services.

Health services are often involved in the initial identification and diagnosis of disabilities and special educational needs. Health professionals such as your GP, health visitor and paediatrician will help you understand the services available to you and your family to ensure you get the right support.

This section provides information about some of the different health professionals that support children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities.

There are a number of organisations that provide healthcare in Sunderland:

**Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group**

Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is a group of GPs, other clinicians and managers who commission (buy) health services for their local communities.

**City Hospitals Sunderland**

City Hospitals Sunderland provide a broad range of Children’s and Maternity Services including tests, rehabilitation, minor surgery, therapy and more specialists treatment and emergency care.

**Northumberland Tyne and Wear Mental Health Trust Children and Young Peoples Service**

NTW Mental Health Trust Children and Young People Service provide children and young people’s mental health (CAMH’s) and learning disability services.

**Harrogate and District Foundation Trust (HDFT)**

Harrogate and District Foundation Trust provide the 0-19 service which includes the Health Visiting Team and the School Nursing Team. If your child is 0-4 years you will be visited at home by a health visitor. Once your child reaches the age of 5, they will be transitioned to the School Nursing Team.
Sunderland Royal Hospital Antenatal Services

During pregnancy the Antenatal Care Team will carry out a number of check including blood tests and scans which may detect potential issues or additional needs of your child. The community midwives also carry out new born checks.

Further early checks are carried out including a hearing check which detects hearing impairment as well as the blood spot check which is carried out on day 5 which can identify metabolic disorders and cystic fibrosis as well as other conditions.

Health Visiting Team

Health Visitors are specialist trained nurses who can assess the development of infants and young children and provide advice and support to meet the identified needs. All families with children under five will have a nominated health visitor.

They offer home visits to all families in the community from pregnancy through to school entry. They support parents with their own health needs and developing healthy lifestyles.

The Health Visiting Team will conduct development checks at 10 days, 6 weeks, 12 weeks, 9 months, 2 years and pre-school where they will check development in order to identify any additional needs. If they identified any issues they would make a referral to the relevant service (see Referral to other services), however the Health Visiting Team would continue to support the family.

School Nursing Team

Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust provides a school nursing service in Sunderland; the school nursing service is made up of Nurses who have additional specialist training or experience in public health and working with children and young people.

In primary schools:

- Health assessments and screening. This includes a hearing and vision test in Reception and height and weight checks in Reception and Year 6
- Advice and support for both children and parents/carers on health issues such as growth and development, healthy eating, weight management, behaviour issues, feelings and emotions, continence, personal hygiene, dental, additional health and support needs
In secondary schools:

- Advice and support for young people and parents on any health issues including feelings and emotions, behaviour issues, weight management, sexual health, continence, smoking
- Drop in sessions for young people to discuss general health issues, smoking, alcohol and drugs, sexual health and relationships, emotions and feelings, additional health and support needs.

**Referrals to other services**

If any concerns or issues were identified, or if a parent had any concerns, a member of either the Health Visiting or the School Nursing Teams would carry out an assessment in order to find out which service would be best for the child/young person to be referred to. This could include:

- Paediatrician
- Speech and Language
- Audiology
- Physiotherapy (this would be via a GP)
- Eye Infirmary
- Occupational Therapy
- Portage
- Early Help
- Early Years Practitioners
- Community Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS)
- Specialist Dentist

**Paediatric Disability Service**

This is a team of consultants and trainees with expertise in paediatric disability.

Any professional who has a concern about a child or young person’s development, learning or where a disability is suspected can refer to the paediatric disability service. Parents can seek referral via their GP, Health Visitor or any other professional involved in their case.
If there are concerns that a child or young person may have a disability or is following a different developmental journey to other children their age, it can be important to identify any health conditions or diagnoses that can be made. This is so that an explanation can be given as to how this might affect the child and family now and in the future.

**Speech and Language Therapy Service (SALT)**

City Hospitals Sunderland Speech and Language Children’s Therapy Service is part of Therapy Services. It is for children and young people aged 0-19. Speech and language therapists are trained to help children to develop their speech, language and communication skills.

The service has an open referral system which means that both parents and professionals can refer directly. Children can access therapy from birth. The nature of the intervention will change with the child and family’s changing needs.

**Health Transition Team**

If you have a child with a learning disability between the ages of 14-25, living in Sunderland, you can get support and advice in your child’s transition between child and adult health services.

There is a small team of learning disability nurses and support workers, who are based at Monkwearmouth Hospital. They offer individual health assessments for your child/young person from the age of 14, towards the development of a health action plan or health transition plan. This is a person centred approach to health, with the aim of your child/young person accessing all relevant health services from child into adulthood.

**Community Dental Service**

The Community Dental Service provides dental treatment for patients of all ages who have difficulty in accessing general dentist services. They provide high quality dental care locally for patients with a wide range of special needs, including children with severe learning disabilities or physical disabilities and children with behavioural management issues.

The service encourages the very early referral of children with additional needs from any health practitioner caring for your child. A self-referral from a parent/carer is also welcome.
**Sunderland Portage Service**

Portage is a home based service for pre-school children with significant additional needs.

Portage Visitors assess the needs of the child and work in partnership with their parents to build on their abilities and develop new skills. Portage Visitors and parents discuss and agree long term goals.

The Portage Visitors then outline carefully structured activities to enable parents to support and encourage effective learning for their child.

Children can be referred through a direct referral to the service from a parent or professional.
COMPLAINTS ABOUT HEALTH SERVICES

Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

Sunderland CCG is the commissioner of local hospital, community and mental health services and you can send your complaint to the CCG about these services. However, the CCG’s Clinical Quality Team will, with your consent, need to forward your complaint to the relevant provider organisation, which will then investigate and respond to your complaint. As commissioners they will take your complaint seriously and will ask the provider to give them a copy of the response to your complaint on conclusion of the investigation.

Sunderland CCG welcomes feedback, positive or negative about your experiences of local NHS services as this helps the CCG to improve services for patients.

If you are unhappy with the treatment or service you have received from NHS services, you have the right to make a complaint, have it looked into and receive a response.

The first stage of the NHS complaints procedure is called ‘local resolution’. Your complaint should be made to the NHS organisation, or primary care practitioner (GP practice, dental practice, community pharmacy or optician) who provided the service. Local resolution aims to resolve complaints quickly and as close to the source of the complaint as possible.

You can make your complaint in writing, by email, or verbally. If you make your complaint verbally, you will be asked to sign and return a written record to ensure that you agree with the contents. Should you prefer to meet with our Complaints Team to discuss your complaint, this can be arranged, though please note that such meetings are by appointment only.

Visit the NHS choices website (see the Useful Links section) to find out more about the NHS complaints procedure.

NHS England is the commissioner of primary care services (such as GP and dental practices) and, if you prefer, you can send your complaint about these services to NHS England using the details below:

- In writing: NHS England, PO Box 16738, Redditch B97 9BT
- Email: England.contactus@nhs.net
- Telephone: 0300 311 22 33
City Hospitals Sunderland

If you have a complaint or concern regarding City Hospitals Sunderland it is best if you could speak to the Ward Sister/Charge Nurse or Matron for the area concerned. Many issues can be resolved by talking things over as misunderstandings can easily happen and sometimes just as easily put right.

If you feel that you do not want to discuss your feelings with the staff concerned then you can ask to speak to one of the Help and Advice Service staff members who will assist you with your problems and liaise with staff on your behalf.

The Help and Advice Service is situated opposite the main lifts on Floor B of Sunderland Royal Hospital. They should be contacted if you wish to express a concern, make a complaint or wish to offer a compliment regarding something that the hospital has done well.

You could also either email the service at helpandadvice@chsft.nhs.uk or telephone 0191 569 9855 or Freephone 0800 587 6513. The service is open Monday-Friday 8.30am – 5pm.

They welcome your opinions on the service they provide as every comment is seen as an opportunity to review the service, so that they can make sure they are offering you what you need.

If you decide to make a complaint, it must be put in writing as soon as possible after the incident. Normally there should be no more than 12 months between the incident and your complaint being raised.

There is more information and guidance about the Help and Advice Service on their website (see the Useful Links section).

Northumberland Tyne and Wear Mental Health Trust

Children and Young Peoples Service

If you want to make a comment, suggestion, compliment or complaint about the service you can:

- Talk to the people directly involved in your care
- Ask a member of staff for a feedback form, or complete a form on the Trust Website www.ntw.nhs.uk (click on the ‘Contact Us’ tab)
- Telephone the Complaints Department on 0191 245 6672

The service is always looking at ways to improve services. Your feedback allows them to monitor the quality of their services and act upon issues that you bring to their attention.
Compliments are a helpful way of letting staff know that they are getting it right, however comments are also valuable because they help improve or change the way we do things. If you have a compliment, comment, complaint or concern about HGFT 0-19 service you can:

- Speak to the practitioner involved in your care
- Speak to a locality manager or service manager by contacting the single point of contact on 03000 031 552, 9am-5pm Monday to Friday
- Give feedback via the Patient experience team online at www.hdft.nhs.uk
- Give feedback via a service user feedback form available from the 0-19 service
- Where concerns or complaints cannot be answered you can contact the Patient Experience Team via the switchboard 01423 555 499.

The service is always looking to improve services for clients and families and welcomes feedback from service users.
SOCIAL CARE

Assessment

Local authorities have a duty by law to assess the needs of a child with a disability. ‘Together for Children’ work on behalf of Sunderland City Council to deliver children’s services in Sunderland.

An assessment is a way of finding out about you and your family and the sort of help you will need. The type of assessment that is carried out is based on a young person’s social care needs. The needs of the parents and/or carers will also be assessed at the same time.

A referral for an assessment can be made by anyone, including the parent/carer of a disabled child, a GP or your health visitor, to the Integrated Contact and Referral Team (ICRT). They will assess whether the referral is passed to either the Early Help or Children with Disabilities teams.

You can contact the Integrated Contact and Referral Team:

8.30am to 5pm Monday to Thursday, 8.30am to 4.30pm Friday
0191 561 7007

At all other times including Saturday and Sunday
0191 520 5552

Early Help

Together for Children’s Early Help service works closely with schools, health visitors and families in Sunderland to provide the right level of support at the right time for families.

They will support you with any concerns about your child or children, your family or home circumstances. It could be around behaviour, problems at school, housing, debt, routines and boundaries or other difficulties.

Early Help Service also provides more intensive targeted support to children, young people and families with more complex needs.

Children with Disabilities Team

If the referral is passed to the Children with Disabilities Team, they will carry out a Child In Need assessment. The social worker will visit the family at home to meet the child and family as well as contacting other professionals who may be involved, for example, health and education workers.
The purpose of this assessment is to gather important information about the child and family, to analyse their social care needs and decide whether the child is deemed ‘in need’ and recommend and provide relevant support to address those needs.

The assessment should take no longer than 45 days to conclude and will be reviewed regularly to discuss how the services your child is receiving are benefiting them. The family is encouraged to attend these meetings, along with other professionals who help provide support to the child.

The Children with Disabilities Team work with children and young people aged between 0-18 years. They will also contribute and attend Education, Health and Care plan meetings for the child or young person.

When a young person reaches the age of 18, they will possibly transfer to adult’s services. In order to start the transition process, the team will carry out a transition assessment after the child’s 16th birthday. This will then be followed by an adult’s needs assessment which will be carried out by Sunderland City Council’s Adults Services.

Complaints regarding Social Care

Complaints about children’s social care, including complaints about social workers are classed at statutory complaints.

Together for Children will aim to deal with your complaint as quickly as possible and hope that most of these can be resolved informally with your social worker, link worker or carer.

If it is not possible to resolve the matter informally, or you would like someone else to deal with your concerns, Together for Children will go through the following stages.

Complaints Process

Stage 1

A manager from the service will be asked to investigate and respond to your concerns. You may be invited to meet with this manager as part of this process. Either way you will receive a written response within 10 working days of making your complaint.

If your complaint is complicated it may take longer than 10 working days but if this is the case you will be contacted in order to agree to an extension.

Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with the Stage 1 response you are entitled to ask the Children’s Services Complaints Manager to progress your complaint to Stage 2 of the procedure.

The Head of Safeguarding will receive reports from an Investigating Officer and
Independent Office within 25 working days (this may be extended to 65 days if necessary) of meeting with you to discuss your concerns. They will then provide you with a written response to your complaint based on the outcome of the investigation. This is called an adjudication letter.

**Stage 3**

If you still remain dissatisfied after receiving your response from the Head of Safeguarding you can ask the Children’s Services Complaints Manager to arrange a Stage 3 Review Panel, which should take place within 20 working days of your request.

A panel made up of 3 people independent of Together for Children will review the Stage 2 investigation into your complaint. You will be invited to the Panel hearing to have your say.

If, after going through Stages 1 to 3, you are still not satisfied with the response you can take your complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

You can contact the Complaints Manager by telephone or email:
Telephone: 0191 561 7997
Email: complaints.children@togetherforchildren.org.uk

Visit Together for Children - Complaints for more details (see the Useful Links section).

**What to do if you are a child or young person and you have a complaint about someone who supports you**

You should try to sort out any complaint you have first with your social worker, link worker, or care worker. If they have been unable to help you, or you do not want to talk about your complaint with them, you should contact the Children’s Services Complaints Manager who will then help you with your complaint.

The Children’s Services Complaints Manager can also get you an advocate from Action for Children to help you make your complaint.

You can contact the Complaints Manager by telephone or email:
Telephone: 0191 561 7997
Email: complaints.children@togetherforchildren.org.uk

There are three stages to deal with your complaint:

**Stage 1**

Together for Children will get a manager to look into your complaint and agree a way to sort it out with you. You will get a letter from that manager telling you what has been agreed.

This might take up to 10 working days.
Stage 2

If you are still not happy you can ask the Children’s Services Complaints Manager or your advocate to take your complaint to Stage 2. An Investigating Officer and an Independent Person (someone who does not work for Together for Children) will investigate your complaint.

When they have finished their investigation the Head of Safeguarding will write to you telling you what Children’s Services are going to do about your complaint.

This should only take up to 25 working days but can take up to 65 working days for more complicated complaints.

Stage 3

If you do not think that the Stage 2 investigation was very good and didn’t deal with your complaint you can ask the Children’s Services Complaints Manager or your advocate to go to Stage 3, which is a Review Panel.

This is where three independent people who have not had anything to do with your complaint before meet with you to find out why you are still unhappy and what you think should be done to sort your problem out. You can take your advocate or a friend or relative with you to this meeting if you want.

The Stage 2 Investigating Officer, Independent Person, Children’s Services Complaints Manager and Head of Safeguarding will also be invited to this meeting.

If following all of this, you are still not happy you or your advocate can contact the Local Government Ombudsman to see if they can look into your complaint.
PREPARING FOR ADULTHOOD

All young people face major changes as they move from being teenagers to becoming adults and need to make important decisions about their future. This change can be even more complicated if you have special educational needs, a learning difficulty or disability. It is important that these young people receive the right support to achieve a smooth transition into adulthood.

A successful move can be achieved by providing the right information at the right time along with relevant support before, during and after the transition to a new place of study or work.

The SEND Code of Practice (0-25 years) states that ‘with high aspirations, and the right support, the vast majority of children and young people can go on to achieve successful long-term outcomes in adult life’

Local authorities and education providers must work with young people from Year 9 onwards to prepare them for adult life. There are four areas that need to be considered:

- higher education and/or employment – including exploring different employment options, such as support for becoming self-employed and help from supported employment agencies
- independent living – enabling people to have choice and control over their lives and the support they receive, their accommodation and living arrangements, including supported living
- participating in society – including having friends and supportive relationships, and participating in, and contributing to, the local community
- being as healthy as possible in adult life

More information on the preparing for adulthood process please read the ‘Sunderland protocol’

The following information is for a child or young person who has an Education Health and Care Plan.

When does the preparing for adulthood process start?

If a young person has an EHC Plan, schools have to start the formal preparing for adulthood process from Year 9 (aged 13/14), which will be the planning for your child’s move to further education, employment or training. This means they will invite you, your child and any other professionals involved with your child to a Year 9 Preparing for Adulthood Review meeting.
Children are supported in advance of the review in order for them to fully understand and maximise the potential opportunity of this review so they are able to make an informed contribution. Preparation will explore what is important to the child now and for the future, how to support them best and to find out what their aspirations are.

From this meeting transition planning must be written into the revised EHC plan, including how any educational, health and social care needs will be met. This will include details about planning for the transition from school to further education, training or employment.

**Who can provide training or job advice and support?**

Connexions Sunderland offers confidential advice and support services for 13-19 year olds (and up to age 25 for young people with special needs).

For details of which Connexions office you should contact and for appointment details visit: [www.connexions-tw.co.uk/connexions-in-sunderland](http://www.connexions-tw.co.uk/connexions-in-sunderland)

**What changes might there be to my child or young person’s benefits?**

Once your child or young person reaches the age of 16, there are changes that will happen to the benefits you or the young person receives. For more information on these potential changes, see the Benefits section of this booklet.

**Transport**

Together for Children Sunderland may offer assistance with Dedicated Transport Provision. The offer is available to students aged 16-25 who live within the Sunderland administrative area and are attending a full-time course of study, who either:

- have had an Education Health and Care Plan and transport was provided as necessary;
- has a medical condition that precludes the use of public transport. A supporting letter from the young person’s consultant must be provided

Following consultation, Together for Children introduced a contribution from parents/carers for the provision of dedicated transport where eligibility has been met. The contribution is set at £651 per year and can be paid in one full amount or in monthly installments, through Direct Debit/Standing Order.

For more information about transport for 16-25 year olds, Together for Children’s [Transport Policy Statement](#), (see the Useful Links section).
For young people who do not meet the above criteria may be able to access concessionary fares. For more information on these visit one of the sites below:

www.nexus.org.uk/bus/tickets
www.nexus.org.uk/metro/tickets
www.nexus.org.uk/student-season-tickets
www.networkonetickets.co.uk

What happens about health and social care when my child turns 18?

For those young people who have an EHCP and who are remaining in education or training, the EHCP retains its statutory status and is reviewed as a minimum every 12 months. The plan should continue to evidence that educational progress continues to be made towards long term aspirations and the outcomes set out in the plan. The review continues to be a multi-agency review and where adult social care is involved the allocated worker must continue to provide information and attend the EHCP review when invited.

Once the young person leaves education the EHCP is no longer a statutory plan but where health or social care elements of the plan remain, the plan should continue as the young person’s Care and Support Plan under Care Act 2014 legislation.

Does my child’s Education, Health and Care Plan automatically continue until they are 25 years old?

No, not automatically. Your child has to continue in education or training until the age of 18 and the majority of young people with an EHC plan complete further education in line with their peers by the age of 19; however some young people need extra time to complete their learning because of their special educational needs.

The SEND Code of Practice says that this ‘does not mean that there is an automatic entitlement to continue support at age 19 or an expectation that those with an EHC Plan should all remain in education until age 25’. The length of time will vary according to each young person, and judgments on when to stop or maintain a plan will be made on a case-by-case basis.

The statutory duty to maintain an EHC Plan will cease once a child or young person leaves education.
Will an EHC Plan continue at University?

The simple answer is no. Studying at this level would be considered a positive outcome from an EHC plan, and a pathway to finding a good job. However, a young person studying at level 4 in a Further Education setting would not be entitled to an EHC plan.

There are separate systems in place to support disabled young people in higher education (HE), including Disabled Students’ Allowances (DSAs). These are non-repayable grants that assist with the additional costs incurred by disabled students. They apply to those studying higher education in a further education environment. DSAs fund a range of support, including assistance with the cost of:

- specialist equipment
- travel
- non-medical helpers (for example sign language interpreters)

For more information see the DSA finance guide (see the Useful Links section).

Can I get help at work?

If you are disabled or have a physical or mental health condition that makes it hard for you to do your job, you can:

- talk to your employer about changes they must make in your workplace
- apply for Access to Work if you need extra help

Your employer must make certain changes, known as ‘reasonable adjustments’ to make sure you are not substantially disadvantaged when doing your job. These could include changing your working hours or providing equipment to help you do your job.

If the help you need at work is not covered by your employer, you may be able to get help from Access to Work but you should talk to your employer about reasonable adjustments before you apply for Access to Work.

To get help from Access to Work you must:

- have a disability or health condition (physical or mental) that makes it hard for you to do parts of your job or get to and from work
- be 16 or over
- live in England, Scotland or Wales
You need to have a paid job, or be about to start or return to one. A paid job could include:

- self-employment
- an apprenticeship
- a work trial or work experience
- an internship

You cannot get a grant for voluntary work and your job must be based in England, Scotland and Wales.

You will be offered support based on your needs, which may include a grant to help cover the cost of practical support in the workplace.

An Access to Work grant can pay for:

- special equipment, adaptations or support worker services to help you do things like answer the phone or go to meetings
- help getting to and from work

You might not get a grant if you already get certain benefits. The money does not have to be paid back and will not affect your other benefits.

Gov.uk has more information about an Access to Work Grant (see the Useful Links section).
Families often tell us that it is difficult to find new, different or interesting places to go with a disabled child or young person, especially if there is an entry charge. Often it can be quite expensive for the whole family to visit somewhere if you then have to leave early, for whatever reason. You certainly won’t feel like you have got very good value for money.

The following are ideas of places to visit free (around the region):

- Chester le Street Park
- Discovery Museum, Newcastle
- Chopwell Woods, Gateshead
- Great North Museum, Newcastle
- Herrington Country Park, Sunderland
- Marine Park, South Shields
- National Glass Centre, Sunderland
- National Railway Museum, Shildon
- Ouseburn Farm, Ouseburn Road, Newcastle
- Preston Park, Eaglescliffe, Stockton (an entry charge applies for the Museum)
- Ryhope Engines Museum, Sunderland (limited opening times)
- South Shields Museum and Art Gallery
- Stewart Park, Marton, Middlesbrough (includes Captain Cook Birthplace Museum, which there is an entry charge for)
- Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens
- Tanfield Railway, Gateshead
- Washington F Pit Museum, Sunderland
Can a carer gain free entry?

We have confirmed that the following venues allow free entry to a carer:

- Beamish Museum
- Alnwick Garden
- Washington Wildfowl Park
- Centre for Life
- National Trust Venues

This is by no means an exhaustive list and lots of places will admit a carer of a disabled person in free – it is always worth asking if this is the case wherever you visit.

Some attractions/venues require proof of disability. This could be in the form of a DLA/PIP award letter etc.

It is also worth mentioning that Beamish and Alnwick Gardens also operate a system where once you have paid for your entry – your tickets are valid for 1 year so you can use them as many times as you wish.

Cinema Exhibitors Association (CEA) Card

The CEA Card is a national card scheme developed for UK cinemas. The scheme ensures participating cinemas make reasonable adjustments for disabled guests when they go to the cinema; in particular it ensures a complimentary ticket for someone to go with them.

The CEA Card allows you to obtain ONE free ticket for the person who is accompanying you to enable you to visit the cinema, by providing the assistance you require as a result of your disability. You must purchase an applicable full price ticket for yourself for the same performance of the same film in the same auditorium. The free ticket is provided on the assumption that the person who accompanies you is able to provide you with appropriate assistance.

Nexus Concessionary Travel

If your child is disabled and lives in Tyne and Wear they can travel on buses in Tyne and Wear for free with a Concessionary Travel Pass. To qualify your child, has to be initially assessed by Children’s Services.

If your child is eligible for a Concessionary Pass you will be given a Confirmation of Eligibility form to allow you to obtain, via post, a pass from the Concessionary Travel Bureau at Nexus’ Head Office.
Please Note: Metro journeys are not covered by the Concessionary Travel Pass or an Under 16 Pop Card. For Metro journeys you would need to purchase an annual Metro Gold Card which costs £25 per year if you live in Tyne and Wear.

- If travelling on bus – use the All Day Concessionary Travel Pass to travel free of charge all day every day
- If travelling by Metro, the Shields Ferry, or on the Newcastle to Sunderland Northern Rail service – use the Metro Gold Card to travel free of charge all day every day
- If travelling on Northern Rail services between Newcastle and Metro Centre/Blaydon – use the Under 16 Pop Card to travel at concessionary child fares.

To find out about eligibility criteria and what documentation you will need to bring with you, contact Sunderland City Council on 0191 520 5552.

For more information on concessionary travel visit the Nexus website (see the Useful Links section).

**Sunderland Empire Theatre**

**Curious Connections** – is a relaxed youth theatre group ran within an inclusive environment at Sunderland Empire Theatre. Make new friends and learn new skills in drama and performance.

The group runs on Mondays during term-time between 4.15pm and 5.45pm for young people aged between 13-18.

**Relaxed Performances** – the Theatre offer ‘relaxed’ performances which are primarily designed for patrons who may be concerned about attending a theatrical performance and may find visiting the theatre daunting. They are informal performances that are designed to benefit people with additional needs, such as autism, ADHD, dementia, young children or indeed anyone who would benefit from a more relaxed environment.

For more information about either Curious Connections or Relaxed Performances email: sunderlandeducation@theambassadors.com

**Accessible Film Screenings**

Dimensions are a not-for-profit organisation that supports people with learning disabilities and people with autism.

They have worked with Odeon, Cineworld, Vue and Showcase cinemas to host autism friendly screenings at over 300 cinemas nationwide.
What makes the screenings Autism Friendly?

- The lights will be on low
- The volume will be turned down
- There will be no trailers at the beginning of the film
- You will be able to take your own food and drinks
- You will be able to move around the cinema if you like

The Dimensions website has more details about the scheme and details of participating cinemas (see the Useful Links section).

**Special Olympics – Sunderland**

Special Olympics Sunderland supply coaching and training for youngsters with learning disabilities in swimming, judo, badminton and other sports. They have qualified coaches in all sports. Children and young people are encouraged to reach their full potential and enter competitions if they wish.

1 to 1 swimming lessons are available for age 6 years and over.

**Special Olympics – Gateshead**

Special Olympics Gateshead is a sporting club for people with disabilities within Gateshead and the surrounding areas.

They are a multi-award winning registered charity and sporting club, which provides weekly sports training in 10 sports for people with learning disabilities, autism and physical disabilities, equipping their athletes with the confidence and skills to participate in regional, national and international sporting competitions.

Visit the Special Olympics Gateshead website for more information (see the Useful Links section).

**Foundation of Light**

The Foundation of Light offer a wide range of disability programmes to ensure young people and adults across the North East can enjoy sport, an active lifestyle and build friendships.

Making Moves, the disability coaching team, deliver fun, exciting and challenging sessions and activities which help develop gross motor skills, balance and coordination as well as encouraging teamwork, communication and confidence.
Visit Foundation of Light website for more information (see the Useful Links section).

**Short Breaks – Whitley Bay Caravan Park**

Together for Children Sunderland have a six berth accessible caravan available at Whitley Bay Caravan Park to enable families with disabled children to enjoy a family short break.

The caravan is accessible by ramp with parking bays next to it. It is a short walk away from the entertainment complex. The park is situated at the far end of Whitley Bay near to St Mary’s Lighthouse.

The caravan is available between March and November each year and bookings will be accepted from January. For more details; request a copy of the terms and conditions; or to book a break at the caravan please contact 0191 520 5552.

**Max Cards**

The Max Card is a discount card for families of children with additional needs. Families simply show their Max Card upon entry to a venue in order to obtain free or discounted admission. The scheme is designed to help these families save money on great days out at castles, zoos, bowling alleys and more.

If you are a parent/carer of a child with additional needs, and live in Sunderland and want to apply for a Max Card, you simply need to sign your child up to the Disabled Children’s Register.

Max Cards are issued when a parent registers their child/ren on the Sunderland Disabled Children’s Register. They are valid for around 2 years however the cards will not be renewed when the initial card expires.
**SUPPORT**

There are lots of support groups and organisations across Sunderland and the region who can offer a wide variety of support.

Please check the [Local Offer website](#) (see the Useful Links section) for the most up to date contact details for the services/organisations listed below:

**Autism in Mind (AIM)**

AIM is commissioned by NHS Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group to provide low level preventative support. They are a solution-focused service that works with individuals and families to enable them to live as independently as possible with the knowledge that if they need any further support, it is available.

**Autism Outreach Team**

The Autism Outreach Team is a well-established multi-disciplinary team, based at Columbia Grange School, comprising of representatives from Education, Health and Social Care.

The AOT offers support and guidance to professionals, parents/carers and children/young people.

**Black and Minority Ethnic Network**

Sunderland Black and Minority Ethnic Network is a registered charity which provides support to organisations and members of the community in the city of Sunderland and surrounding area.

**Down’s Syndrome North East**

DSNE provides help and support to people with Down’s syndrome and their families and friends across Northumberland, Tyneside, Wearside, Durham and Teeside.

They send out quarterly newsletters and regular “What’s on Where” information sheets. DSNE organises opportunities for families to meet up together through subsidised trips to the theatre, Christmas parties for all age groups and many other social and leisure opportunities.
FISCUS Community Advice

FISCUS is a registered charity in Sunderland which provides Advice, Crisis Support and Community Services in Sunderland and the wider North East. They can offer support and advice on debt issues; benefits advice or if you are looking for work.

Hope 4 Kidz

Hope 4 Kidz work tirelessly to support the well-being of youngsters who require various degrees of extra care, whether they are suffering from a physical or mental disability; living with a serious or prolonged illness; or need respite from poverty of abuse.

They also support children with special needs with equipment, education, respite and the relief of poverty.

Include ‘In’ Autism

Include ‘In’ Autism is a team of experienced, knowledgeable, dedicated and passionate workers who provide support to families and individuals who live with autism and associated conditions.

They offer support in a home, school, college or employment environment in order for the person with autism to feel included and accepted no matter what environment they are in. They also advocate for individuals with autism through the assessment process both pre and post diagnosis.

More than Grandparents

This is a support group ran by and for Kinship Carers. A kinship carer can be anyone raising the child of a family member or a friend. Kinship carers can also be referred to as family and friends carers.

The group aim to help carers understand their rights and entitlements and sources of support available to them and their children to minimise the risk of families living in poverty.

Parent Carer Transition Group – Sunderland Carers Centre

A support group for parents/carers who care for a young person aged between 14-25 years. The group meets on the last Thursday of every month (except during school holidays).
**Shiney Advice and Resource Project (ShARP)**

The service covers the Coalfields and Washington area and have drop in’s in Houghton, Shiney Row, Galleries and Concord.

ShARP provide a range of services that include advice and guidance including welfare benefits, debt management, housing and employment; access to training; children’s activities and services for older people.

**Sunderland Carers Centre**

Sunderland Carers Centre is a city-wide charity that supports people of all ages and backgrounds who have the difficult task of looking after a loved one, including parents and carers of disabled children.

If you support a family member or friend to maintain their health, wellbeing and quality of life, then you are a carer. This could mean your day to day lifestyle is affected. Receiving information advice, guidance and support can make a difference, and Sunderland Carers Centre are there to help.

The Centre provide a range of services including one-to-one support and a listening ear; carrying out Carer’s Assessments on behalf of Sunderland City Council; peer support groups; and representation and support at meetings with other services to make sure you are getting all the help you are entitled to.

**Sunderland SEND Information, Advice and Support**

The SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (IASS) offers direct impartial and confidential support, advice and information to parents/carers and children and young people.

There are two sections to the Information Advice and Support Service: Parent Partnership, which offers advice to parents and carers and the SEND Children and Young People’s Information, Advice and Support Service which children and young people can access independently.

**Sunderland Parent Carer Forum**

Sunderland Parent Carer Forum (formerly Sunderland, Washington and Coalfields Parent Carer Council) are a parent led group of parents, and carers of children and young people who have special education and/or additional needs.

They encourage and support parents and carers to participate in helping to shape the services provided for their children and young people who have special needs.
Washington Mind Young People’s Project

Counselling for young people aged between 13-25 years, who live in Hetton, Houghton, Sunderland and Washington.

Washington Mind engages in active participation with young people to ensure that the service meets their needs. Young people can self-refer, thus providing choice and increased accessibility, allowing for timely access and service provision within non-stigmatising environments.

Young Carers

Sunderland Carers Centre have trained staff who offer one-to-one support and guidance to children and young carers aged 5-25 whose lives are impacted by having a caring role. This might be because they look after someone themselves or are part of a family where someone is cared for and it has an impact on the young person’s life.

Through a range of support and activities targeted at relevant age ranges the team helps young carers develop life skills, build confidence, develop friendships and relationships, and provides time out from their caring role. The team also work to build and maintain excellent relationships with local schools, Sunderland College and the University of Sunderland to further identify and support young carers.

Young Carers school card scheme

The young carer’s card is for young carers who are having problems at school because they are looking after someone at home. Young carers can carry the card with them at school so they can show the card to teachers when they are having problems.

The card is for young carers who are unable to, or find it difficult to:

- Arrive at school on time if they take younger siblings to school first
- Stay after school without prior warning
- Finish homework on time due to caring responsibilities

Or they may need to:

- Carry a mobile phone (on silent) so they can keep in contact with the person they care for
- Leave early so they can collect younger brothers or sisters
Youth Drug & Alcohol Project (YDAP)

The YDAP Team offers specialist services for young people up to their 18th birthday, living in the Sunderland area who have complex needs associated with substance misuse.

YDAP works with young people whose substance use is problematic and impacting on their life with negative effect, for example, housing, family education or offending behaviour. The team will meet young people wherever is comfortable for them, which could be at home, school, youth club etc.
MONEY AND BENEFITS

There are a number of benefits that could be available to you and/or our family depending on your circumstances.

Included below is some information that may be useful to you if you had a disabled child or young person, however the benefits section of Sunderland City Council’s website may contain additional useful information (see the Useful Links section).

Child Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for children may help with the extra costs of looking after a child who:

- is under 16
- has difficulties walking or needs much more looking after than a child of the same age who doesn’t have a disability

They will need to meet all of the eligibility requirements.

The DLA rate is between £22.65 and £145.35 per week and depends on the level of help the child needs.

Usually, to qualify for DLA for children, the child must:

- be under 16
- need extra looking after or having walking difficulties
- be in Great Britain, another European Economic Area (EEA) country or Switzerland when you claim - there are some exceptions, such as family members of the Armed Forces
- have lived in Great Britain for 2 of the last 3 years, if over 3 years old
- be habitually resident in the UK, Ireland, Isle of Man or the Channel Islands
- not be subject to immigration control

For more detailed information visit GOV.UK (see the Useful Links section).
Child Tax Credit

Eligibility for Child Tax Credit is not dependent on a child having a disability. You may be able to claim Child Tax Credit if you are responsible for children either:

- aged 16 or under - you can claim up until 31 August after their 16th birthday
- under 20 and in eligible education or training

You don’t need to be working to claim Child Tax Credit. Only one household can get Child Tax Credit for a child.

Child Tax Credit is being replaced by Universal Credit and you can usually only claim Child Tax Credit if you don’t live in a Universal Credit area. Sunderland will become a Universal Credit area in July 2018.

In a Universal Credit area, you can only claim Child Tax Credit if either of the following applies:

- you have 3 or more children
- you or your partner have reached Pension Credit qualifying age

If you are unable to apply for Child Tax Credit under the above circumstances, you would need to apply for Universal Credit instead.

The amount of benefit you receive depends on when your children were born:

If all your children were born before 6 April 2017

You could get the ‘child element’ of Child Tax Credit for all of your children. You will also get the basic amount, known as the ‘family element’

If one or more of your children were born on or after 6 April 2017

You could get the child element of Child Tax Credit for up to 2 children. You might get the child element for more children if exceptions apply. You will only get the family element if at least one of your children was born before 6 April 2017. For more information visit GOV.UK (see the Useful Links section).

Carers Allowance

Carer’s Allowance is a benefit for people who are giving regular and substantial care to disabled people in their own homes. Carer’s Allowance is a taxable benefit and forms part of your taxable income.

You can get Carer’s Allowance if you meet all of the following conditions:
• you are aged 16 or over and not in full time education

• you spend at least 35 hours a week caring for a disabled person who gets one of the following benefits:
  – Attendance Allowance
  – Disability Living Allowance – the middle or highest care rate
  – Constant Attendance Allowance
  – Personal Independence Payment - daily living component (either rate)
  – Armed Forces Independence Payment

• you don’t earn more than £120 a week after deductions such as tax and national insurance

• you are in Great Britain when you claim - there are some exceptions, for example, for members and family members of the Armed Forces

• you have been in Great Britain for at least 2 of the last 3 years - unless you are a refugee or immediate family member of a refugee

• you are habitually resident in the UK, Ireland, Isle of Man or the Channel Islands

• you are not subject to immigration control that would stop you getting benefits.

For more information visit GOV.UK (see the Useful Links section).

Income Support

You may be able to get Income Support if you are on a low income. It is particularly common for carers, parent or people looking after young children to get it. Other people can be eligible, so it is worth checking even if you are not in one of these groups. How many hours you work and how much you earn also affects whether you can claim Income Support.

You can’t usually claim Income Support if you are already getting Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

Universal Credit is replacing Income Support. You might need to apply for Universal Credit instead.

You can usually claim income Support if you are 16 or over and:

• either pregnant, a carer or a single parent looking after a child under 5

• working less than 16 hours per week (you might still be eligible if you do unpaid voluntary work or go on unpaid parental or paternity leave)
• under Pension Credit qualifying age
• on a low income or have no income
• have less than £16,000 in savings

For more information visit GOV.UK (see the Useful Links section).

**Child with SEND reaches 16**

At 16, your child can claim benefits in their own right. They may get this if they have a disability that means they are unlikely to get a job. Previously young people would have made an application for Employment and Support Allowance however this benefit is now within Universal Credit.

If your child stays on in education, you may have a choice. Either you can carry on claiming for them as part of your family or they can claim for themselves as a disabled adult. But, if they do, any benefits or Tax Credits you get for them will stop. You need to weigh up which option is best for your family.

If you get the maximum rate of Child Tax Credit or you get Income Support or income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance you could be a lot worse off if your child claims benefits in their own right.

Each family’s circumstances are different, so it is important to get advice before your child turns 16.

There are a number of agencies/organisations in Sunderland than can offer help and support around benefits:

• Shiney Advice and Resource Project (ShARP)
• Pallion Action Group
• Welfare Rights Service
• Citizens Advice
• Sunderland Carers Centre also work with Welfare Rights Service to offer benefits advice for carers
Appointeeship

What is an Appointeeship?

If a person is incapable for their own finances due to physical or mental health incapacity and cannot cope with claiming benefits, paying bills or managing money they may need an appointee to provide help. An appointee may be required on a temporary or permanent basis.

Only one appointee can act on behalf of someone who is entitled to benefits. An appointee can be an individual, e.g. a friend or relative; an organisation, or representative of an organisation, e.g. a solicitor or local council.

The process

- Usually about 6 months before a child turns 16, DWP contact parents/carers in writing and ask who is going to manage their benefits
- Parents can request to be made ‘Appointee’, if it is appropriate
- Involves a home visit by DWP to determine if young person has capacity to manage their own benefits
- Will need to provide bank account details. May need to set up a suitable bank account
- If approved, the parent will be left with a sheet confirming ‘Appointeeship’

Who needs one?

A young person may need an Appointee if they:

- have no (or limited) concept of money or of its value
- are vulnerable to exploitation - e.g. would give all of his/her money to ‘friends’
- have difficulties with managing small amounts of change such as bus fares, or with budgeting
- come across like a younger child, or have a specific difficulty - such as learning disability, ADHD, Autism.

What it means

- A parent or carer then becomes responsible for managing the benefits of that young person
- it does not have to be ‘for life’
- another trusted person can take on the role, if preferred
there are specific responsibilities attached to becoming an appointee, so need to be fully aware of these

Appointee’s responsibilities

As an appointee you are responsible for making and maintaining any benefit claims. You must:

• sign the benefit claim form
• tell the benefit office about any changes which affect how much the claimant gets
• spend the benefit (which is paid directly to you) in the claimant’s best interests
• tell the benefit office if you stop being the appointee, e.g. the claimant can now manage their own affairs

For more detailed information visit GOV.UK (see the Useful Links section).

Deputyship

What is Deputyship?

You can apply to become someone’s deputy if they ‘lack mental capacity’. This means they cannot make a decision for themselves at the time it needs to be made. They may still be able to make decisions for themselves at certain times.

People may lack mental capacity because, for example:

• they’ve had a serious brain injury or illness
• they have dementia
• they have severe learning disabilities

As a deputy, you will be authorised by the Court of Protection to make decisions on their behalf. There are two types of deputy:

• Property and financial affairs deputy – you will do things like pay the person’s bills or organise their pension
• Personal welfare deputy – you will make decisions about medical treatment and how someone is looked after. You cannot become someone’s personal welfare deputy if they are under 16. Get legal advice if you think the court needs to make a decision about their care.
Becoming a deputy

You can apply to be one type of deputy or both. If you are appointed, you will get a court order saying what you can and cannot do. When you become a deputy, you must send an annual report to the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) each year explaining the decisions you have made.

You do not need to be a deputy if you are just looking after someone’s benefits. Apply to become an appointee instead.

For more information visit GOV.UK (see the Useful Links section).

Personal Independence Payment

What is Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

Personal Independence Payment, known as PIP is money for people who have extra care needs or mobility needs (difficulty getting around) as a result of a disability. It replaces Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for all claimants aged 16 to pension age.

Like DLA, PIP has 2 components:

- Daily living component
- Mobility component

Each component will have two rates:

- Standard
- Enhanced

Unlike DLA, PIP is a points-based system: 8 points to qualify; 12 points for the enhanced rate.

The process

Around the child’s 16th birthday, families receive a letter from DWP advising that DLA is ending and that they need to act now. They will then need to:

- make an initial phone call to start off the PIP claim. This must be done within 4 weeks of receiving the letter from DWP. Only then will they be sent a claim form
- complete and return the form within 4 weeks of receiving it

If families fail to make the initial call to start off the claim, the child’s DLA payment will stop. This can have a negative impact on household income as other benefits may then also stop or be reduced.

For more information visit GOV.UK (see the Useful Links section).
Employment and Support Allowance

What is Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

ESA is a benefit that could give you some money if you have an illness or disability that affects your ability to work.

There are two types of ESA:

Contribution based ESA - you can get this if you have paid enough National Insurance Contributions.

Income related ESA - you can get this if you are on a low income, either on its own or in addition to contribution based ESA.

What will I be paid?

Every claim for ESA is assessed and this process usually takes 13 weeks. While your claim is being assessed, you will receive the assessment rate for 13 weeks. This will be:

- up to £57.90 a week if you are aged under 25
- up to £73.10 a week if you are aged 25 or over

If the outcome of your claim is that you are eligible for ESA, you will be put into a group, which will affect how much ESA you continue to receive. You may be put in to either:

- the work-related activity group. This is for people who will prepare to return to work and will get some support to do that.
- the support group. This is for people who are unable to return to work due to their illness or disability.

Claiming ESA

To claim ESA call Jobcentre Plus on 0800 055 6688 (textphone 0800 023 4488). They will ask you questions over the phone and fill in the form for you. Alternatively, you can download a claim form from gov.uk. You will need to include a medical certificate from your GP and provide your GP contact details.

For more information visit GOV.UK (see the Useful Links section).
Permitted Work

What is Permitted work?

Permitted work can help you learn new skills, help build your confidence and help you start thinking about types of work you could do.

You may be able to do some work if you have a disability, illness or health condition and still have the security of keeping any of the following benefits payments and National Insurance credits:

- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Incapacity Benefit (IB)
- Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA)

Permitted work let you:

- work for less than 16 hours each week
- earn up to £125.50 every week after tax and receive your normal amount of benefit
- build up your skills and experience
- be supported while you work – this is called supported permitted work
- do voluntary work – there is no limit on how many hours a week you can do voluntary work for
- there is no limit on the number of weeks you can do permitted work for.

If you are in receipt of ESA, fill in the permitted work form before you start any paid or unpaid work. Send it to the Jobcentre Plus office that deals with your benefit. They will tell you if the work you want to do meets the permitted work conditions.

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a means-tested benefit for people of working age who are on a low income.

It replaces six existing means-tested benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Housing Benefit
Child Tax Credit

Working Tax Credit

Universal Credit is paid on a monthly basis. Entitlement is worked out by comparing your basic financial needs that the government says you need to live on with your finance resources.

You can apply if you are:
- Aged between 18 to pension age*
- In the UK and not subject to immigration control
- Have no income or low income
- Are too ill to work
- Unemployed or jobseeker
- Employed but on a low wage
- Lone Parent/couple/single person
- Carer
- Needing help with rent or mortgage
- Needing help with childcare costs
- Have savings less than £16,000

* 16-17 year olds can only apply in limited circumstances - pregnancy; recently had a baby; carer; responsible for a child; have limited capability for work (illness/disability)

**Work requirements**

Must accept a ‘claimant commitment’ where you (or both members of a couple) are expected to:
- Look for full-time work, or better paid work
- Take steps to prepare for work

There are 3-4 different levels of work requirements, depending on your circumstances.

There are tougher sanctions on not fulfilling the claimant commitment.

**What is included in the payment?**

- Housing costs
- Personal allowances for single/joint claimants
• Child allowances
• Childcare costs
• Carer
• Limited capability for work/related activity
• Disable child element (reduced by more than half to about £29 per week)
• Severely disabled child element

Claiming and payments

Universal Credit must be claimed and managed online at www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit.

• Inform DWP of changes
• upload documents online using ‘journal’
• For couples, the payments are made to one person
• Paid monthly in arrears, with an initial 6-8 week wait for payment
• may be able to get advance/hardship payments, but these will be treated as a loan
• help with cost of housing is paid directly to the claimant, not to the landlord

For more information visit GOV.UK (see the Useful Links section).
USEFUL LINKS

30 Hours Free Childcare:
https://togetherforchildren.org.uk/index.php/families/childcare

Childcare Choices:
https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/

Childcare in Sunderland:
https://www.sunderlandinformationpoint.co.uk/kb5/sunderland/directory/results.page?familychannel=2150

City Hospitals Sunderland – Help and Advice Service:
https://chsft.nhs.uk/patients-visitors/help-and-advice-service

Disability Access Fund:
https://www.sunderlandservicedirectory.co.uk/kb5/sunderland/directory/service.page?id=XmW7J4BNSo4&localofferchannel=0

Dimensions – Autism Friendly Film Screenings:

Disagreement Resolution, Mediation and Tribunal Service:
https://www.sunderlandservicedirectory.co.uk/kb5/sunderland/directory/advice.page?id=U68VYbEtWw

Early Education for 2 year olds – Family Portal:

Elective Home Education:
https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/electivehomeeducation

Family Portal:

Foundation of Light:
https://www.foundationoflight.co.uk/sports-coaching/disability-coaching/

Local Offer:
https://www.sunderlandinformationpoint.co.uk/kb5/sunderland/directory/localoffer.page?localofferchannel=0
Nexus:
http://www.nexus.org.uk/concessions/disabled-children

NHS Choices:

School Admissions:
https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/schools-admissions-infant-junior-primary

SEND Information Advice and Support Service:
https://www.sunderlandservicedirectory.co.uk/kb5/sunderland/directory/service.page?id=mCoN6gIz8ew&localofferchannel=0

Special Olympics Gateshead:
https://www.sogtw.org/

Sunderland Carers Centre:
http://www.sunderlandcarers.co.uk/

Sunderland City Council - Benefits Information:
https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/benefits-and-support

Sunderland Information Point:
https://www.sunderlandinformationpoint.co.uk/kb5/sunderland/directory/home.page

Sunderland Local Offer:
https://www.sunderlandinformationpoint.co.uk/kb5/sunderland/directory/localoffer.page?localofferchannel=0

Sunderland Schools Directory:

Sunderland SEND Information Advice and Support Service:
https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/sen

Together for Children - Complaints:
https://www.togetherforchildren.org.uk/aboutus/complaints

Together for Children - Childcare:
https://www.togetherforchildren.org.uk/families/childcare

Together for Children – Transport Policy:
https://sunderland.fsd.org.uk/kb5/sunderland/directory/service.page?id=6OIN41UsV3A&localofferchannel=0
GOV.UK Links:

Access to Work:
http://www.gov.uk/access-to-work

Appointeeship:
https://www.gov.uk/become-appointee-for-someone-claiming-benefits

Carers Allowance:
https://www.gov.uk/carers-allowance

Child Tax Credits:
https://www.gov.uk/child-tax-credit

Deputyship:
https://www.gov.uk/become-deputy

Disability Living Allowance:

Disabled Students Allowance:
https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas/further-information

Employment and Support Allowance:
https://www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance

Income Support:
https://www.gov.uk/income-support

Legal Advice:
https://www.gov.uk/find-a-legal-adviser

Personal Independence Payment:
https://www.gov.uk/pip

Universal Credit:
https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit
INFORMATION GAPS AND FEEDBACK

This booklet is intended to be used as a guide for families and young people who have a special educational need or disability and may need support, information, advice or guidance.

While every effort has been made to ensure that all of the details contained in the booklet are correct and up to date, things do sometimes change and it is strongly recommended that details of services are checked on the Local Offer website first.

We have purposely kept the number of telephone numbers and contact details to a minimum as these are the things that change most frequently.

There are a number of links that are included in the booklet so if you are using this resource online you can click the link to take you to the relevant site, however, if you are using a paper version of the booklet the full address is either next to the link, or listed at the back.

Gaps in service information on the Local Offer

As previously explained this information booklet does not contain information about specific services, however the Local Offer website does.

We try really hard to ensure that all services/activities that we become aware of are detailed on the Local Offer site, we are sure there is much more available out in the community that we maybe don’t detail. If you know of anything that should be on our Local Offer that isn’t please can you take a few minutes to let us know so that we can get the information added on? Simply email: fis@togetherforchildren.org.uk

Your views are important

Gathering views and feedback from professionals, families, parents, carers or young people themselves helps us to improve the amount and quality of information we can provide.

Please spare us a few minutes to let us know how what you thought of either this booklet, and/or the Local Offer site. Send your feedback to fis@togetherforchildren.org.uk