



Special Educational Needs Advice Centre

**ADVICE, INFORMATION & ADVOCACY**

**Practical information and advice on getting  
the right support in school for children  
with special needs and learning difficulties**

**Charity Commission No. NIC101355**

# Parents Experiences

*I feel like I am constantly fighting... it never ends.*

*I feel like crying.*

*Sometimes people in authority don't realize how difficult it is for a parent to ask questions, I was petrified.*

*My child went under the radar his difficulties weren't picked up*

*Banging my head off a brick wall*

*I am at a loss about what to do*

*We are meeting a brick wall with the school.*

*I can't cope with my work and all this at the same time.*

*I am just exhausted over the years.*

*I am finding the system very frustrating to get the answers I need*

# Who We Are



- ❑ Registered charity/ Limited company working in NI since 2003.
- ❑ Regional.
- ❑ Funded by donations, fundraising events and funds from Charitable Foundations and Grant award bodies.
- ❑ Team of 6 staff and 6 Advice Line volunteers.
- ❑ Governed by a volunteer Management Committee of Directors which includes parents with children who have special educational needs.

# What we do



SENAC offer:

- ❑ Practical information and advice on getting the right help and support in school for children with special needs and learning difficulties
- ❑ Support and advocate for children and young people up to the age of 19yrs.
- ❑ SENAC assists parents to be advocates for their child in the challenge to secure adequate education provision.
- ❑ Increase parent's understanding of the Assessment and Statementing of Special Educational Needs in N. Ireland

- ❑ Legal Framework - Assist understanding & application of the legal framework – **Education(NI) Order 1996** as amended by the **Special Educational Needs and Disability(NI) Order 2005**
- ❑ Code of Practice -Increase parents understanding of the Code of Practice-Article 4, 1996 Order
- ❑ Refer and provide details of other relevant organisations e.g. CLC- Appeals/ Tribunals; SENDIST; DARS & specialist charities.

## ☐ Statements and Assessments.

Assist parents in interpreting professional reports, statements of special education and correspondence from the Education Authority

☐ Provide practical guidance on the assessment and statementing process

☐ Advise on content/implications of statements

- specifying and quantifying educational provision;
- choice of school and
- definition of educational needs

# Services:



- ☐ Telephone Advice-Line- Confidential, independent advice and information
- ☐ Advocacy service delivered by Advice Worker/Children's Advocate.
- ☐ Looked After Children- 'Every Chance to Learn'
- ☐ Signposting –other organisations/services/resources.

# EA replaces ELBs

- 1 April 2015, the Education Authority (EA) took over the roles and responsibilities of the former Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and the Staff Commission.
- Staff of the former ELBs at the same numbers in the Regional Offices of the EA. The Regional Offices are responsible for the delivery of services within the same geographical area as the ELBs.



# Special Educational Needs System in Northern Ireland

The SEN system has 5 stages

- Stages 1, 2 and 3 are the **‘school based stages.’**
- A large majority of children with learning difficulties have their special needs met by schools, within the school based stages.

# Stages 1 - 3

- **Stage 1** – a child is identified as having difficulties
- **Stage 2** – ongoing concern  
Individual Education Plan (IEP.) – PLP
- **Stage 3**- the school can call in specialist services provided by the Education Authority, e.g. Behaviour or Literacy support Services.

# Individual Education Plan

## Stage 2 – Ongoing concern

- Individual Education Plan (IEP) - PLP
- Targets, learning objectives, teaching strategies, resources, parental & pupil involvement & review arrangements
- Read it carefully.
- If you don't agree/understand it, explain why not and ask to have it changed.

## Stages 4 - 5

- **Stage 4** of the SEN system is called '**Statutory Assessment.**' This assessment is intended to identify the children with the more complex and/or severe learning difficulties.
- Both schools and parents have a legal right to apply for a Statutory Assessment.
- **Stage 5** of the SEN system -the issue and maintenance of a '**Statement**'.

# Statutory Assessment

## Parental report

- During Statutory Assessment parents have an opportunity to submit their own parental report on their child.
- Use it to give a full picture of your child's difficulties.

# Contents of the Statement:

## Part 2- Special Educational Needs

- Should describe all the child's learning difficulties identified during the statutory assessment.
- It should also include a description of the child's functioning - what the child can and cannot do.



# Contents of a Statement

## Part 3

- Specifies the special educational **provision** which the board considers **appropriate to meet the needs specified in Part 2**
- and any appropriate facilities and equipment, staffing arrangements and curriculum required to meet the identified needs



# Important

- The courts have said that Part **2** of a statement is like a **diagnosis** and Part **3** should be like a **prescription**
- It is therefore important that Part 2 should specify **each and every one** of the child's learning difficulties. Parents should check that the description of their child's needs given in Part 2 matches their experience of their child. **If it doesn't- ask for a meeting with the board to discuss the differences.**





# Review

- If a child has a Statement, it will be reviewed every year
- It is important to attend each Annual Review



# Code of Practice

**‘Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs’**

see our website – [www.senac.co.uk](http://www.senac.co.uk)

Click on Useful Reading



# Status of the Code

- The Code is not law, but it is strong advice from the government.
- Not complying with the Code can have legal consequences.

# Legal Responsibility

When a child has a Statement the legal responsibility for meeting his/her needs **transfers from the school to the Education Authority**

# Changes to SEN system

- SEND Bill at committee stage - NI Assembly

## **Main points:**

- 5 stages – 3 levels
- Levels 1&2 school responsible. Level 3 EA
- Statements will remain but will be Coordinated Support Plans
- Current 26 weeks to complete SA reduced to 20 weeks

- CASE STUDY 1

Child with **ADHD & severe sensory issues**. Mainstream class of 29. Could not tolerate noise, smells, school routine. Made repeated attempts to escape.

- ***Got placed in Speech & Language Unit 7 children, 2 Adults and a full time classroom assistant.***
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- CASE STUDY 2

Seventeen year old with **hearing impairment, ASD traits, low ability**. Struggled in mainstream, achieving nothing academically.

- ***Negotiated an IEP which included home tuition in some subjects and vocational college for others. Now on course achieve GCSE equivalent qualification in Horticultural Studies, participated in work placement and his self esteem has improved significantly.***
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# Making a difference



- CASE STUDY 3

12yr old reading age 8yrs, Dyslexia, difficulty with notes, parents applied statement CA not specified, only peripatetic support for 2 hrs per week.

- *Advocacy worker met with Board, Parent & Ed Psych in Board premises. **Secured ICT assessment**, Board funded additional **dyslexia friendly software programme** for home & school, access to **laptop**, computer **training** & **15hrs C A***

- CASE STUDY 4

Mother rang Advice Line – unaware of Stages or IEP – talked through a draft letter requesting information on what has been put in place/what stage/where child is in relation to her peers.

Mother sent in letter. Principal responded by referring to Ed Psych told child would be seen in Sept.

# Every Chance to Learn



## Pilot project

Children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities, aged 8-19 years, within the care system.

- **Specialist Knowledge** – Complex, adversarial system. Education Advocate will apply specialist knowledge of SEN system to ensure applied to full capacity
- **Needs Led Service** – assist children and young people to understand the options available to them
- **Sensitivity** – work alongside young person their carers, social workers, teachers and other key workers
- **Confidential** – independent, confidential service
- **T: 028 9079 7706 E: [christine.boal@senac.co.uk](mailto:christine.boal@senac.co.uk)**



*The meeting went really well thanks to your wonderful advice (I had it all written down beside me so I wouldn't forget!)*

*SENAC has given me the confidence to deal with my concerns*

*SENAC have been such a great help with letters and advice.*

*The adviser had a better understanding of the system than me*

*Don't know what we'd have done without you, it was a difficult road*

*Nice to get an unbiased opinion, that is a lot of useful information I didn't have.*

*It was very calming and reassuring to speak to you this morning*



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# **ADVICE LINE**

# **028 9079 5779**

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday

**10am – 1pm**

**[www.senac.co.uk](http://www.senac.co.uk)**