



Somerset SENDIAS

Special Educational Needs and Disability
Information, Advice and Support (0-25)

A free impartial service for children and young people with SEND (aged 0 – 25) and their parent/carers

Referrals Policy

Introduction

Somerset SENDIAS is a free, confidential and impartial service for children and young people aged 0–25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and their parent/carers.

The service operates in accordance with the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice. It provides accurate information, advice and support relating to education, health and social care to enable children, young people and families to make informed decisions.

Somerset SENDIAS operates at arm's length from the Local Authority. The service is independent and impartial, ensuring that advice is based on law and evidence rather than organisational interest or local practice.

All information shared with the service is treated confidentially and managed in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Vision

Somerset SENDIAS aims to empower children and young people with SEND and their parent/carers to participate fully in decisions about their lives, ensuring their voices are heard and valued. We strive to support positive outcomes for children and young people, enabling them to achieve their potential and prepare for adulthood with confidence and independence

Aims

Somerset SENDIAS will:

- Provide impartial, confidential and accessible information, advice and support relating to SEND
- Ensure advice is accurate, legally based and evidence informed
- Support children, young people and families to understand their rights and responsibilities
- Promote participation and co-production, ensuring views and wishes are central to decision-making
- Enable families to make informed choices about SEND processes and provision
- Support navigation of processes including EHC needs assessments, plans, reviews, complaints and appeals
- Promote independence and self-advocacy
- Deliver a service that is inclusive, accessible and responsive to diverse needs
- Work constructively with partners while maintaining independence from the Local Authority
- Continuously monitor, evaluate and improve service delivery in line with national standards



Somerset SENDIAS

Special Educational Needs and Disability
Information, Advice and Support (0-25)

A free impartial service for children and young people with SEND (aged 0 – 25) and their parent/carers

Section 1 – Referrals

Somerset SENDIAS is a self-referral service. Referrals must be made by:

- Young people 16-25
- Parent/ Carers of children aged 0-15 (no consent from the child required)
- Parent/ carers of children and young people aged 15- 25 (consent from the child/ young person required at point of referral)

Schools, professionals and other agencies may:

- Signpost to the service
- Support families to complete a referral

Referrals can be made by completing the referral form on the website

www.somersetSENDIAS.org.uk. The referral form must be completed before Somerset SENDIAS can support families.

On receipt of the 'Referral' form the Somerset SENDIAS Manager will triage the referral form and if it contains all the information and consent it will be allocated to a member of staff to support the child, young person or parent/carer.

The SENDIAS Administrator will send an introductory email to the young person or the parent/carer informing them which member of staff will be supporting them and when contact will be made.

Initial contact will be attempted using the preferred method, which may include:

- telephone call (leave a message if unanswered);
- email
- text or WhatsApp
- video call

A minimum of three contact attempts will be made. If there is no response a follow up email will be sent and if there is no response within the timescales outlined in the email, the case will be closed.

We aim to acknowledge and process all referrals within **2 weeks** from date of referral, although this may vary during school holidays or staff leave.

Section 2- What we do and do not provide

In line with SENDIAS Minimum Standards, Somerset SENDIAS delivers support in accordance with the following principles:

- **Impartiality**
Information, advice and support is unbiased and based on legislation, the SEND Code of Practice and the individual circumstances of the case. All options are explained fairly to support informed decision making.



Somerset SENDIAS

Special Educational Needs and Disability
Information, Advice and Support (0-25)

A free impartial service for children and young people with SEND (aged 0 – 25) and their parent/carers

- **Independence**
The service operates at arm's length from the Local Authority and other services, ensuring it is both independent and perceived as such by service users.
- **Confidentiality**
Personal information is treated with respect and handled in accordance with GDPR and confidentiality policies.
- **Participation**
Children, young people and parent/carers are actively supported to express their views, wishes and feelings and to participate fully in decisions about their support.
- **Accessibility**
The service is accessible to all, with information provided in a range of formats and adapted to meet individual communication needs.
- **Empowerment and informed choice**
Service users are supported to understand their rights, responsibilities and available options, enabling them to make informed decisions and develop confidence in self-advocacy.
- **Evidence based challenge**
Where practice does not align with statutory duties, SENDIAS provides appropriate and constructive challenge based on evidence and legal frameworks

Support may include (but is not limited to):

- Providing information, advice and signposting
- Preparation for meetings
- Attendance at meetings (where capacity allows)
- Support with EHC needs assessments and plans
- Support to gather information for SEND processes
- Support with complaints, mediation or tribunal processes

There is no fixed limit to the duration of involvement, however support will be outcomes focused and regularly reviewed.

To ensure clarity about the role of Somerset SENDIAS, the service does not provide the following:

- Decision-making or case management
- Legal representation
- Advocacy that replaces the voice of the child, young person or parent carer
- Taking sides in disputes
- Complaints handling for other services
- Crisis or emergency services

Section 3 - Monitoring and Supervision of Casework

Somerset SENDIAS ensures that all casework is effectively monitored and supported to maintain high quality, consistent practice in line with SENDIAS Minimum Standards.



Somerset SENDIAS

Special Educational Needs and Disability
Information, Advice and Support (0-25)

A free impartial service for children and young people with SEND (aged 0 – 25) and their parent/carers

- Staff receive monthly one to one supervision, providing a structured and confidential opportunity to review individual practice, reflect on complex or sensitive casework, and identify learning and development needs to support high-quality service delivery
- Case tracking meetings take place as a minimum of fortnightly for each member of staff.

These meetings are used to:

- Review individual caseloads
- Ensure appropriate progress is being made
- Identify any delays or barriers to progression
- Provide opportunities to discuss and agree potential solutions for cases that are complex or not progressing

This structured approach supports consistency, accountability and continuous improvement across the service.

Confidentiality may only be breached where there are safeguarding concerns or where required by law.

Section 4- Termination of Involvement of SENDIAS

Young people, parent/ carers may choose to end their involvement with the service at any stage.

SENDIAS also reserves the right to withdraw its involvement where it is considered appropriate, including in the following circumstances:

- Where the intended outcomes have been achieved.
- Where no further progress is deemed possible.
- Where other services or agencies are sufficiently involved and SENDIAS input is unlikely to provide additional benefit.
- Where the parent carer or young person has secured legal representation, such as a solicitor or SEND advocate.
- Where continued involvement may present a risk to staff safety.
- Where a young person, parent or carer's behaviour is considered unreasonably abusive or threatening.
- Where the working relationship between SENDIAS and the young person, parent/ carer has broken down beyond repair.

While situations are expected to be rare, SENDIAS will ensure that young people, parent/ carers are signposted to other appropriate sources of advice and support where possible.

Section 5- Recording information

Any records will be held on the electronic database and are held in accordance with the GDPR (2020) and Somerset SENDIAS Confidentiality Policy (2021).

Records of involvement will be closed when an outcome is reached.



Somerset SENDIAS

Special Educational Needs and Disability
Information, Advice and Support (0-25)

A free impartial service for children and young people with SEND (aged 0 – 25) and their parent/carers

A feedback form is sent to children, young people, their parent/carers or practitioners at this stage. Feedback received is reviewed regularly and used to monitor service quality, identify areas for improvement, celebrate good practice and inform service development.

Section 6 – Contact details

Somerset SENDIAS
The Hollies Children's Centre
South Street
Taunton
TA1 3AG

01823 355578
sometersendias@somerset.gov.uk
www.sometersendias.org.uk

Date written: June 2026
Review date: June 2027

To request this Policy in Easy Read, Braille, Large print or Translated into other languages, please contact Somerset SENDIAS on 01823 355578 or email somersetsendias@somerset.gov.uk