

● children with complex needs

Many children with a visual impairment also have other disabilities and health conditions. Children with complex needs (or complex disabilities) live with two or more disabilities and require high levels of support. Children and their families may need support from health, social care and education organisations.

The term 'complex needs' covers a range of conditions, each affecting children and their families in different ways. Here are some common conditions (terms) for children with visual impairment and complex needs:

Visual Impairment with additional needs

Children with visual impairments often have another learning or physical disability or Autism. Some may have a combination of all of these.

Profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD)

Children with severe and complex learning needs, in addition they have other significant difficulties, such as physical disabilities or a sensory impairment.

Deaf-blindness

Deaf-blindness is a combination of visual and hearing impairment, but does not necessarily mean totally blind and deaf. It is sometimes called Dual Impairment or Multi-Sensory Impairment.

Complex Medical Needs or Life-limiting conditions

Children with complex medical needs require high level support. These health conditions can occur alongside other disabilities and visual impairments. Common health issues include epilepsy, cerebral palsy and heart and lung conditions. Some children have rare genetic conditions such as Charge Syndrome.



Having a visual impairment as well as other disabilities can make teaching and encouraging the child quite complex. It is important that families receive as much information and advice as possible. However, this can cause a great strain on families as they are constantly meeting with professionals, within the home or within local authority settings. At the same time, the family is attempting to continue with family life and some kind of normality.

Children with complex needs require specialised support and equipment to develop and reach their full potential, both in society and in their learning, and it is important that the professionals involved support both the child's visual impairment and his/her physical, educational, emotional and social needs.

Once your child has been recognised as having some learning/physical difficulties, professionals involved in the child's development as well as visual impairment will begin to support and advise you as to where to go and how to go about the next stage.

● **common assessment framework (CAF)**

This is a shared assessment used by all children's services in England. The CAF will ensure that everyone involved with your child, such as teachers and health visitors, works together to support your child. The CAF will help your child receive the right support at an early stage. As the CAF is a shared assessment you and your child will not have to repeat the same story to different workers. The CAF is voluntary so you and your child can choose whether or not to be involved.

If a number of different people are providing support to your child, one of these may be appointed as a "Lead Professional." This person will keep you informed, listen to your views and support you. The named worker will also co-ordinate all the services supporting your child. You and your child will have a say in who should be the lead professional.



● the local children with disabilities team

This team of social workers will support you in finding occasional respite for you and your family. If your child has a great many needs, including medical, it can be difficult to find a babysitter who is competent enough and the Children with Disabilities Team can look at this for you. They can also support you in a number of other ways. Contact your local social services and ask for the Children with Disabilities team.

● the local offer

Each local authority has an online resource known as the local offer, which provides information for children and young people with special educational needs (SEND) and their parents or carers in a single place. It shows families what they can expect from a range of local agencies including education, health and social care. You can find your areas local offer on the local authorities website.

● parents and carers forums

Nearly all local authority areas have an independent parent and career forum (sometimes called Parent in Partnership or Parent Champions). These groups represent the views and voice of families and young people with disabilities. They provide parent to parent support; help understanding the local offer and training and advice.



• specialist toys

Children who have additional disabilities may need specialist toys to encourage them to develop their full potential. However, these toys can be expensive. (See Grant Providers – section 10 for further details).

There are many toy libraries for parents to use, which can save the expense of buying expensive pieces of toys or can allow you to try the toy/piece of equipment before investing in it. Ask your health visitor, social worker or specialist teacher for further information.

You can save money by making things and sometimes you will find similar things in shops like B&M Bargains, Pound stretcher or local £1 shops.

Here are some example of companies who supply specialist toys, sensory and educational equipment.

Mike Ayres Design <https://www.mikeayresdesign.co.uk/>

Rompa <https://www.rompa.com/>

Sensory Education <https://www.cheapdisabilityaids.co.uk/>

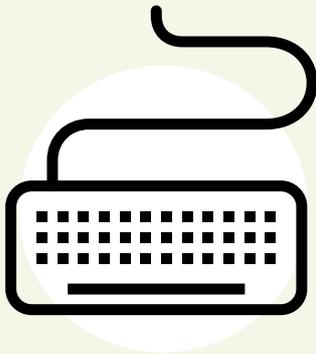


• further reading and useful links:

Contact for families with disabled children.

Contact are a national charity who help families feel valued, supported, confident and informed. They give guidance and information and bring families together to support each other.

<https://contact.org.uk/>



Sense

National charity who are: “For everyone living with complex disabilities. For everyone who is deafblind. Sense is here to help people communicate and experience the world. We believe that no one, no matter how complex their disabilities, should be isolated, left out, or unable to fulfil their potential.”

<https://www.sense.org.uk/>



Council for disabled children

The council for disabled children are the umbrella body for the disabled children’s sector bringing together professionals, practitioners and policy-makers.

[https://
councilfordisabledchildren
.org.uk/](https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/)

NHS – Caring for children with complex needs

This webpage has some useful information about the NHS and other organisations.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/caring-for-children-and-young-people/how-to-care-for-children-with-complex-needs/>

IPSEA - Independent Provider of Special Education Advice

Known as IPSEA this registered charity offers free and independent legally based information, advice and support to help get the right education for children and young people with all kinds of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). They also provide training on the SEND legal framework to parents and carers, professionals and other organisations.



Henshaws: 4a Washbrook House, Lancastrian Office Centre,
Talbot Road, Stretford, Manchester M32 0FP.

Contact us on: 0300 222 5555 or email: info@henshaws.org.uk

Registered charity number: 221888