



Barnsley SENDIASS

Talking Things Through: Communicating Effectively About SEND

A Quick Guide for Parents, Carers, Children and Young People

Sometimes conversations about education, support, or services can feel difficult to arrange or challenging to have. When concerns are not discussed early, they can sometimes grow into bigger disagreements later on.

Good communication can help everyone understand each other's views, work together positively, and find solutions more quickly.

Here are some simple tips to help you communicate effectively and advocate for yourself or your child. There is also a checklist that you might find helpful when going through this process.

1. Think About What Is Worrying You

Take a moment to identify the main issue that is bothering you.

Ask yourself:

- What is the main concern?
- Why is it important?
- What difference would I like to see?

Focusing on the key issue can help keep conversations clear and productive.

☒ *Tip: Try to identify the "burning issue" rather than raising several concerns at once.*

2. Involve Your Child or Young Person

Where possible, ask your child or young person for their views.

Consider:

- How do they feel about the situation?
- What is working well?
- What would they like to change?
- What support do they think would help?

Their views are important and can help shape any discussions.

☒ *Remember: Children and young people often have valuable insights into what would make things better.*

3. Speak to the Right Person First

Different issues may need to be discussed with different people.

For example:

Concern	Who might help?
Classroom support	Teacher or SENCO
School processes	School leadership team
EHCP issues	EHCP Coordinator or Caseworker
Transport	Transport Team

Wider concerns	Appropriate service manager
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Starting with the person most closely involved can often lead to quicker solutions.

4. Make Some Notes

Before speaking to someone, write down:

- The issue you want to discuss
- Important facts
- Questions you want answered
- What outcome you would like

Many people find it easier to communicate when they have notes to refer to.

☒ *A simple list can help you stay focused during conversations or meetings.*

5. Ask for a Conversation

Where appropriate:

- Arrange a phone call.
- Request a meeting.
- Ask for time to discuss your concerns.

Many misunderstandings can be resolved through a calm conversation.

If needed, you may wish to follow up in writing by email or letter to confirm what was discussed.

6. Use Written Communication Carefully

Some people use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to help draft emails or letters.

While AI can sometimes help organise thoughts, consider:

- Whether the final message reflects your views.
- Rewriting sections in your own words.
- Keeping the focus on your child or young person's individual needs and experiences.

☒ *Your own voice and your child's experiences are often the most powerful parts of any communication.*

7. Check Your Facts

Before raising a concern, consider:

- Do I have the correct information?
- Is there evidence that supports my concern?
- Have I seen relevant reports, letters, emails, or records?

Accurate information can help make discussions more productive.

☒ *Facts and evidence are usually more helpful than assumptions.*

8. Keep It Factual and Focused

Try to describe:

- What happened
- When it happened
- How it affected your child or young person
- What support or change is being requested

Focusing on facts rather than personalities can help keep conversations constructive.

☒ "I am concerned that support has not been provided consistently and would like to understand how this can be addressed."

9. Talk It Through With Someone You Trust

Before sending an email or attending a meeting, it can help to discuss your thoughts with:

- A family member
- A friend
- A trusted professional
- SENDIASS

They may help you clarify your points and ensure your message is clear.

10. Think About Your Approach

When emotions are high, it can be difficult for everyone involved.

Before a conversation, ask yourself:

- Am I feeling calm enough to discuss this?
- Am I speaking clearly and respectfully?
- Am I giving others the opportunity to respond?
- Am I focusing on finding solutions?

A calm and respectful approach can help others understand your concerns and reduce the risk of misunderstandings. You can also expect to be treated in this same way too.

Remember

Most people involved in supporting children and young people want positive outcomes. Communication works best when everyone:

- ✓ Listens respectfully
- ✓ Shares information openly
- ✓ Focuses on the child's needs
- ✓ Tries to find solutions together
- ✓ Raises concerns early

Early conversations can often prevent issues from escalating and help maintain positive working relationships.

Need More Support?

If you are unsure who to speak to or need impartial information, advice or support, SENDIASS may be able to help you understand your options and prepare for discussions with professionals.

Good communication does not mean agreeing on everything. It means ensuring everyone feels heard, understood and focused on achieving the best possible outcome for the child or young person.

Contact us:

- Follow us on Facebook at BarnsleySENDIASS
- Call us on 01226 787234
- Email us at sendiass@barnsley.gov.uk