

West Sussex SEND Information,  
Advice and Support Service (SENDIAS)

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# Volunteers



west  
sussex  
county  
council

## What is a SENDIAS Volunteer?

The West Sussex SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIAS) has a small number of trained volunteers who are able to support parents who have a child/young person (YP) with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Our volunteers may be able to attend meetings with you or help you to put your views in writing.

## How can SENDIAS Volunteers help parents?

Volunteers may be able to help in a variety of different ways.

They can support you to:

- Write letters or reports, for example for you or your child's annual review, or as part of the EHC Needs Assessment process
- Find the right services and support through the Local Offer
- Understand the timetable for an EHC Needs Assessment
- Prepare for school meetings and if possible attend meetings with you

They can support in a practical way by:

- Listening to what you have to say
- Finding out information on your behalf, with your permission
- Checking your draft EHC Plan
- Taking unofficial notes in meetings so you can concentrate on what is being said and on putting your point across.

At all times, volunteers can refer to SENDIAS staff for advice and support.

## Who are SENDIAS Volunteers?

Our volunteers may be parents themselves, or they may have experience of working in schools, or they may just be interested individuals who empathise with parents of children/YP with SEND or the young person themselves.

They should possess the following:

Personal attributes:

- Honesty, reliability and integrity
- Willingness and ability to listen and empathise with parent carers/YP
- An understanding of types of issues parent carers/YP face
- Ability to remain impartial

- A calm, considered manner
- Commitment to the task of providing support

Skills and knowledge:

- Working knowledge of special educational needs (SEN)
- Good communication skills, ability to understand and explain complicated subjects in a straightforward way
- Good writing skills

Practical:

- Ability to travel around the county
- Availability in school time

## **What SENDIAS Volunteers will not do**

Volunteers will not make professional judgements about you or your child, or make decisions for you.

Volunteers are there to support you and they will not work directly with professionals. They will only communicate with professionals with your permission, and/or support you to do the same.

The volunteer role is to assist you with specific issues concerning you, or your child's SEND. They are not able to get involved in other ways, though they can refer to SENDIAS staff who will endeavour to help you to locate other sources of support.

## **How can I get a Volunteer?**

Contact the SENDIAS helpline on 0330 222 8555 and speak to one of our Parent Advisors about the support you are seeking. It is helpful to have at least two week's notice if you would like support at a meeting.

We will try to locate a suitable volunteer for you and will let you know when we have done this. We will then arrange with you for the volunteer to contact you to introduce themselves and make arrangements.

As we only have a small number of volunteers it may not always be possible for us to match you up with a volunteer, but we will do our best and in the event this is not possible we will discuss alternatives with you.

If you do receive support from a volunteer we have a written agreement, that you both sign, that sets out what the volunteer will do.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer please contact SENDIAS.

## How to contact us


Helpline: **0330 222 8555**

By Post: **SEND Information, Advice and Support Service  
St James Campus  
St James Road  
Chichester  
West Sussex  
PO19 7AB**

Email: **[send.ias@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:send.ias@westsussex.gov.uk)**

Website: **[www.westsussexsendias.org](http://www.westsussexsendias.org)**

**SEND** = Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities



The role of the SENDIAS service is to ensure that all parents, children and young people have access to impartial information, advice and support so they can make informed decisions related to their SEND. Any information that is shared with the service is in confidence unless permission has been obtained to share this with other individuals, services and agencies that may be able to help the family with their circumstances. To view our policies, and our privacy notice, please look at the SENDIAS pages on the Local Offer: [www.local-offer.org](http://www.local-offer.org)