

An Introduction to SENDirect

Who are we?

SENDirect is an accessible online service that **allows families of children with additional needs to find, compare, and buy** activities, support, and services that meet their child's needs. Launched in January 2015, SENDirect will revolutionise the way services for children with additional needs are designed and commissioned by putting families at the centre of the process. We will also make it easier for organisations to promote their services directly to families and reduce the administration behind contracting directly with them.

Established by a consortium of the UK's leading charities

- Ambitious about Autism, Contact a Family, Dyslexia Action, Family Fund, I Can, Kids, Mencap, The National Autistic Society, and Scope
- SENDirect invites your organisation to join us in our mission to provide a single port of call for families and change the landscape of accessible services.



Why is it needed?

Research carried out by SENDirect shows that families struggle to find the right support:

- **77% of families say it is 'quite or very difficult' to find information on services**
- **26% say they 'rarely find the services they need'**
- **55% of families are 'not very or not at all happy' with the current choice of provision.**

How will SENDirect change this situation for the better?

SENDirect helps families to secure better outcomes for their children by making it easier to identify the right support. For the first time, **families will be able to find services like yours quickly - and feel confident that their child will be welcome.**

SENDirect will also work in partnership with parents, commissioners, and service providers to **make sure that valued services are sustainable** and that **different and better services can be created** in response to families' needs.

"It would be fantastic to have information about various provisions all in one place, to avoid endless trawling of the internet, trying to find something that you are not sure even exists!"

Doug Morris, parent of Ben, who has Spinal Muscular Atrophy



How does the SENDirect website achieve these goals?

- Our simple tool allows families to **search for and compare support, activities and services**, making it easier for families to find the right provider
- Families, care managers and providers are able to **communicate online to discuss and negotiate on provision**, saving time and making it easier to keep track of negotiations
- Families can **read and post reviews** to assess quality and suitability of services before purchasing, which leads to better outcomes and ensures that successful services receive positive publicity
- Families can make **online payments for services and goods** which is convenient for families and reduces demand on back office resources for providers
- High-profile and comprehensive nature of platform means that **families can find all the services they need in one place and providers only need to advertise on SENDirect**

What else will SENDirect do to bring about change?

SENDirect will use data collected through the web platform, as well as consultation with families and providers, to identify gaps in provision and to lobby for them to be filled using the combined power of our founding consortium and our providers.

This lobbying will involve:

- **Influencing** – producing and publicising research papers for the attention of funders and commissioners locally and nationally
- **Practical interventions** – facilitating business development and partnership working amongst providers

Why now?

SENDirect was set up in response to recent changes in legislation giving people with special educational needs and disabilities more choice and control over their care and support packages:

- **The Care Act 2014** made it obligatory for all local authorities to offer people with additional needs, or their principal carers, a **personal budget** with which to buy all required care and support services.
- **The Children and Families Act 2014** required local authorities to publish a **local offer** detailing all care and support services in the area. SENDirect supports local authorities to fulfil their statutory duty around provision of, consultation on, and review of this local offer.

More Information

For more information on how your organisation can be a part of SENDirect, please see the Membership Benefits leaflet in your Provider Information Pack or go to

www.sendirect.org.uk/information/sendirect-for-professionals/

“The thing about SENDirect is that it was designed by parents in the first place. You know you can trust information on there, as it’s like being recommended something by your best friend.”

**Annie Bannister,
Leicestershire Family
Voice**

“SENDirect will create new opportunities for service development. This is because not only will it capture data on searches but it will provide an analysis of the type of services that people are looking for which are unavailable in their area.”

**Julie Drake, Head of
Strategy – Commissioning,
Leicestershire County
Council**

“I hope that SENDirect will become a comprehensive networking tool for providers, i.e. helping us to market our company, but also allowing us to be aware of other companies in our area providing the same, similar, or complimentary services together with providing maximum choice of suppliers to families and professionals.”

**Nicki Pitts, NewStart
Networks CIC (Provider)**

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