How do I request Portage involvement?
Parents/carers and professionals working with the family can refer to Portage. Parental consent is essential. Referrals are always discussed at MAISEY to ensure that the criteria for Portage is met. Demand for the service is very high and families may need to be placed on a waiting list until a home visitor becomes available.

What happens next?
The first contact with a family will be through a visit with the Early Years Educational Psychologist (EP). They will gather information on developmental history and current skills. This visit also gives an opportunity to discuss Portage in more detail and for parents/carers to ask questions. Shortly afterwards, a home visitor will be allocated and visits will begin.

What families tell us about Portage….
“Portage has helped us feel more confident in how we play with our daughter.”
“She provided us with emotional support.”
“He developed many new skills. Amazing!”

For further information, please contact your local Portage Supervisor at one of the following Multi Professional Area Bases.

Mendip & South Somerset
Somerset County Council
PO Box 5176
Shepton Mallet
BA4 9DD
Tel: 01749 822800

Sedgemoor & Taunton & West Somerset
The Holway Centre
Byron Road
Taunton
TA1 2JD
Tel: 01823 334475

A registered NPA 4 Star Service
**What is Portage?**

The Somerset Portage Service is registered with the National Portage Association (NPA) and provides a model of service delivery based on the NPA core aims and principles. These include:

- Helping children with additional needs and their families to learn together, play together, participate and be included in their local community.
- To play a part in minimising the barriers often faced by young children with additional needs and their families.
- Support the development of inclusive services for children.

**What happens on a Portage home visit?**

Families receive weekly visits from their allocated home visitor lasting for approximately one hour.

The Portage Home Visitor will always arrive with a range of resources which s/he has carefully matched to a child’s developmental stage and interests. The activities will promote development through play.

There are 3 main elements to every home visit:

- **Structured Teaching** - where the focus is on providing activities which develop specific skills.
- **Child Led Play** - where the aim is to find out more about the child’s current skill levels and interests.
- **Family Focus** - where parents/carers have the opportunity to share concerns and celebrate successes.

**Partnership working**

Within the Portage model, parents/carers are acknowledged as the people who know their child best and home visitors seek to build on this knowledge. Profiles or developmental checklists may help in the process of identifying strengths and small step goals for future development.

**The Portage Team**

In Somerset, we have 4 teams of Portage Home Visitors, each team being supported by a Senior Home Visitor and an Educational Psychologist who provides regular supervision sessions.

**Who is eligible for Portage?**

Portage would be considered for children up to the age of 4 years 11 months who have additional needs. We would normally look for a delay of at least one year in more than one developmental area, although flexibility is needed for children who are very young at the time of referral. Portage Home Visitors remain involved with children and their families for a maximum of three school terms.