

OUR STORY



Guidance for parents/carers on making a request for an Educational Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment and also for completing the form for the parental contribution to the EHC needs assessment.

Introduction

This guidance describes what needs to be in place to help your child learn and make progress before considering a request for an Education Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment.

The guidance is also to help you give us the information we (the Local Authority) need to make a decision about whether to undertake an EHC needs assessment.

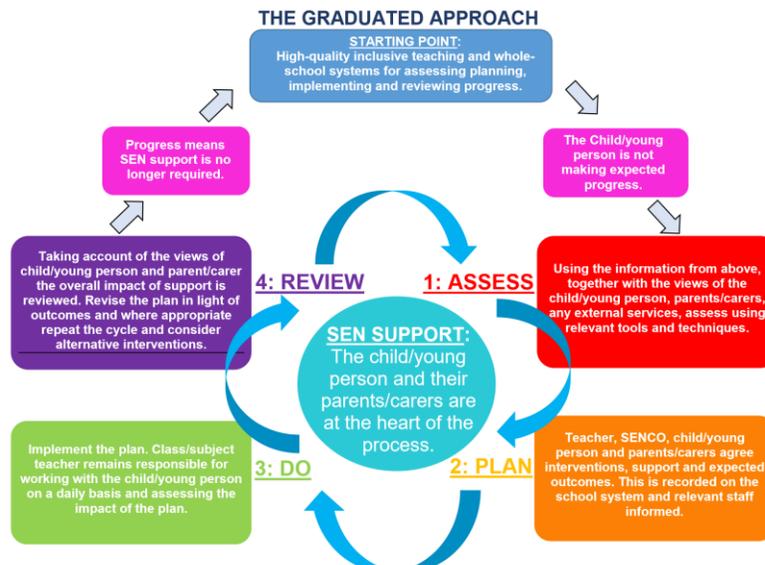
If we decide to carry out an EHC needs assessment this information will be sent to all professionals who will contribute to the assessment of your child's/young person's needs. It will help them understand your views and your concerns and what you would like for your child/young person in the future.

Before requesting an EHC needs assessment

Children and young people make progress at different rates and learn in different ways. Teachers are expected to take this into account when planning their lessons to ensure each pupil in their class can learn. This is called "differentiation." Schools are also expected to make sure that "quality first teaching" is in place.

Teachers carry out regular assessments to monitor the progress of each pupil in their class and this helps identify pupils who are not making the expected progress based on their age and circumstances.

If a teacher suspects a child or young person has Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) then they will follow what is known as a "graduated approach". It is called "assess, plan, do, review."



This means that if your child/young person has been identified as needing additional support, this will be discussed with you and an individualised programme of short term teaching and intervention will be put in place to identify the needs more clearly and to help your child make progress. This is called 'SEN Support' and your child may be placed on the school's SEN register and have an individual support plan that is agreed with you. After the support has been in place for a period of time, your child's progress will be reviewed to see whether the additional support has helped.

If your child has still not made progress, the school/setting will be able to call on some specialist expertise to advise on teaching and other strategies. This could include, for example, help and advice from an educational psychologist or the outreach service for children with autism or the Sensory Support Service or they may refer to other specialists for more detailed assessments such as speech and language therapy, physiotherapy or occupational therapy.

Working together

It is really important that parents and schools/settings work closely together to ensure your child gets the right support through the "assess, plan, do, review" approach and that decisions and actions are reviewed and refined to get a good understanding of your child's needs.

Your child's Individual Support Plan should have clear outcomes with short term targets and strategies. It should cover all aspects of your child's needs including whether there are any health issues or diagnoses or social care issues. It is important to get a holistic picture of your child. This is often set out in a "one page profile" of your child so that all who work with him or her have an understanding of the needs.

Schools/settings are expected to have followed the cycle of "assess, plan, do, review" for at least four terms and called upon the expertise of specialists before submitting a request for an EHC needs assessment. They are also expected to have used the resources available to them within the school's budget to provide support for your child/young person. This can be called a "provision map".

Requesting an EHC needs assessment

If the child/young person has been receiving SEN Support for a least four terms and is not making expected progress the school/setting will discuss with you that it may be appropriate to request an EHC needs assessment. The school/setting will then, with your agreement, send the application to the Local Authority's SEN Team together with all the necessary information.

Parents/carers and the young person (if they are over 16) are also able to request an EHC needs assessment directly to see whether an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is needed. It is always advisable that the parent and the school/setting discuss this together so that there is agreement that the request is appropriate. You can do this using the pro forma or you can send us a letter or email or telephone us.

After the request has been received we (the Local Authority) will then need to gather some information from both you and the school/setting and others who may have already been working with your child in order to help make the decision about whether an EHC needs assessment is needed.

Making the request – you views are important

Your views will help us make the right decisions together for your child. We will ask others too, but you know your child best and so it is important to help us understand what you would like to be different for your child and how an EHCP will help.

We have a form for parents to complete when making the request for an EHC needs assessment. It is not compulsory to use the form but it is helpful as it gives us all the information we need. It is important that we get the views of everyone who has parental responsibility. Please see the notes below.

Support with completing the request form

You may wish to use these guidelines - they make suggestions about what you might wish to write.

If you would like to discuss your views with someone for advice and help to make your contribution to the EHC needs assessment such as a relative or friend who knows your child well, or for that person to write it down on your behalf. Your child's teacher at school or in the Early Years setting will be happy to help too.

You can also contact Medway SEN Team where an officer can guide you through the process: Telephone: 01634 331123 or email: seneducationteam@medway.gov.uk

The following support is offered by Medway SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIAS) and this is a helpful starting point if you are looking for assistance. They can help in a variety of ways including:

- telephone support and advice on completing your contribution
- email support and reviewing/commenting on your contribution
- home visits from an Information, Advice and Support Officer or an independent parental supporter to discuss and help you prepare your contribution.

Contact Medway SENDIAS on 01634 566303 or email medwaysendias@family-action.org.uk

Guidelines for writing a contribution to 'Our Story'

These guidelines are to help you make your contribution to your child's EHC needs assessment. It would be useful if you use the headings we have suggested in the form, as doing so will help us to understand your child's strengths and needs, what your areas of concern are, what you would like to be different for your child, and how that will improve things. Your written contribution may be as short or as long as you wish.

If it is agreed to do the assessment and we then decide to issue an EHCP we will include your views about what is most important to you and your child. You will be able to amend this information if you wish during the assessment process. The headings we are using will help us know what difference you would like an EHC needs assessment and plan to make for your child. It is really useful for us to know about your child's strengths, needs and aspirations for the future.

It is also important for you to tell us what outcomes you want for your child and what outcomes are important to your child.

The EHC needs assessment usually takes 20 weeks but sometimes sooner. Please see the **EHC Needs Assessment Timeline** which sets out the key decision making points so that you will know what to expect during the EHC needs assessment. During that time your SEN officer will be in contact with you and will arrange a meeting with you either to co-produce the draft EHCP with you or to discuss the way forward if an EHCP is not to be issued.

The response form, 'Our Story' provides a framework with the headings we have suggested.

This is an important document. It is your assessment of your child and his/her needs and how those needs might be met. Think carefully about what you are going to say about your child. Be as detailed, but as concise as possible with key points.

My child/young person

My child's/young person's early years until starting school

You may choose to give some background information and tell us about:

- any issues during pregnancy and/or at birth
- your child/young person as a baby and key milestones
- who helped you
- any changes which affected your child

What my child/young person is like at home

Think about:

- is your child/young person co-operative?
- what is his/her behaviour like?
- what activities does he/she enjoy?

How my child/young person interacts with others

Think about:

- how he/she gets on with others such playing with friends after school or in the holidays
- other family members they get on well with

My child's/young person's strengths and what he/she is good at

Think about:

- is your child/young person particularly thoughtful and loving with people
- is he/she good at helping
- is he/she good with technology

How my child/young person prefers to communicate

Think about:

- how you let your child/young person know when things are going to change
- how you help him/her make choices
- how you help him/her follow simple instructions such as 'first this' and 'then that' approach
- how your child/young person lets you know what he/she wants
- what help he/she needs to communicate such as using key words, signing or visual cues or gestures

What is important to my child/young person and what makes him/her happy

Think about:

- important people or pets
- favourite books or trains or music
- favourite activities or clubs

What are your child's/young person's needs or difficulties and what does he/she need help with?

Tell us what you are worried about and what you think needs to change.

Education:

What is working well with your child's/young person's learning at nursery/school/college and how is their educational progress?

Think about:

- what your child/young person is achieving at school
- what he/she is good at – for example, reading, writing and number skills speaking and listening skills, drawing or music or sport
-

What difficulties is your child/young person having at school/college?

Think about:

- what he/she finds difficult at school
- how difficult is it for your child/young person to concentrate at school
- how willing is he/she to take part in learning activities
- what is his/her behaviour like at school?

Health & Wellbeing:

You might like to comment on:

- how well your child/young person eats and sleeps
- any serious illnesses or periods in hospital
- any diagnoses that have been made and when
- your child's/young person's physical skills, eg walking running, writing scribbling drawing
- what support is your child having eg: speech and language therapy or support from child and adolescent mental health services

Social Care:

You might like to comment on any service you are receiving from social care such as:

- help from a social worker
- access to short break activities
- help with personal care at home
- any other support such as adaptations to the home, occupational therapy

Independence:

You might like to comment on:

- your child's/young person's self-help skills eg toileting, dressing and undressing, feeding him/herself
- his/her awareness of danger
- showing independence in day-to-day activities
- independent travel
- steps towards independent living

Future Aspirations:

Tell us about aspirations for the future you have for your child/young person. These can be longer term aspirations to help your child/young person as they move into adulthood such as:

- getting a job or going to college/university

- being able to live as independently as possible
- making his/her own decisions
- having good friends and relationships
- being able to communicate well with peers and adults

NOTES:

Young Person definition

This relates to a young person who is no longer of statutory school age i.e the end of June in year 11.

Parental Responsibility

You automatically have parental responsibility if you are the child's mother, if you have adopted the child, if you are the child's father and are married to the child's mother, or you have been registered on the birth certificate as the father (since December 2003). You do not automatically have parental responsibility if you are not married to the child's mother (unless since December 2003 you have been registered on the birth certificate as the father), or if you are not the natural or adoptive parent.