

Helpline Number:

01785 356921



Staffordshire
S.E.N.D
Family Partnership



Information
Advice & Support
Service

EHC needs assessment
for children in early years
settings or at school

EHC needs assessment for children in early years settings or at school

This information is about Education, Health and Care needs assessment, which is sometimes called statutory assessment. It covers:

- children in early years settings
- children and young people of school age.

You might also like to look at our information leaflet on **Education, Health and Care plans**.

What is an EHC needs assessment?

An EHC needs assessment is a detailed look at a child's special educational needs (SEN) and the support he or she may need in order to learn.

Local authorities are responsible for carrying out EHC needs assessments under the **Children and Families Act 2014**.

The needs assessment brings together information about:

- what your child can and cannot do
- the special help they need.

It includes information from:

- you
- your child
- the early years' setting or school
- other professionals who work with or support your child.

The assessment is to see if your child needs an **Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan)**.

When is an EHC needs assessment necessary?

The school or early years setting can often give your child help through **SEN support**. This means that the school makes additional or different provision from that provided to most other pupils to meet their needs. Sometimes other professionals will give advice or support to help your child learn.

Some children need more help than school can provide. If your child does not make progress despite everything the school has tried, an EHC needs assessment might be the next step.

The **SEND Code of Practice** says:

In considering whether an EHC needs assessment is necessary, the local authority should consider whether there is evidence that despite the early years provider, school or post-16 institution having taken relevant and purposeful action to identify, assess and meet the special educational needs of the child or young person, the child or young person has not made expected progress. (9.14)

The local authority will look at:

- your child's attainments and rate of progress
- their special educational needs
- what has already been done
- the difference that support has made
- your child's physical, emotional and social development and health needs.

The law states that if your child has or may have special needs and may need provision to be made via an EHC plan, the local authority must conduct an EHC needs assessment. This means that you do not have to prove that an EHC plan is definitely necessary to obtain an assessment, you just have to show it may be necessary. If you think your child needs more help than the school can provide, you can ask for an assessment.

The **SEND Code of Practice** says:

A local authority must conduct an assessment of education, health and care needs when it considers that it may be necessary for special educational provision to be made for the child or young person in accordance with an EHC plan. (9.3)

Some children and young people will have needs that clearly require an EHC needs assessment and EHC plan. Once the local authority is aware that this is the case it should start the process without delay.

You can find out more about the criteria that local authorities should follow in the **SEND Code of Practice** sections 9.3 and 9.14 to 9.16.

Who can ask for an EHC needs assessment?

- parents – by writing to the local authority
- a young person over the age of 16 but under the age of 25
- the early years setting or school, but only after talking with you first.

It is always a good idea to talk to the school or early years setting before asking for an EHC needs assessment.

You can request an EHC needs assessment by contacting the Local Authority directly through the Single Point of Access. Telephone **0300 111 8007** or email sendreferrals@staffordshire.gov.uk

If you would like impartial support with this, the **SEND Family Partnership** can help you make your request. Contact 01785 356921 or email sfps@staffordshire.gov.uk

What happens when the local authority gets a request for an EHC needs assessment?

As soon as the local authority gets a request for an EHC needs assessment they **must** tell you about it.

The **SEND Code of Practice** says:

In considering whether an EHC needs assessment is necessary, local authorities should pay particular attention to the views, wishes and feelings of the child and his or her parent, or the young person. (9.12)

The local authority has up to six weeks to decide whether to make a needs assessment. During this time it may ask you, the school and other professionals for information.

It will look at all the information and must then tell you whether it has decided:

to start the EHC needs assessment immediately

OR

that an EHC needs assessment is not necessary.

What happens if the local authority decides that an EHC needs assessment is not necessary?

The local authority **must** tell you why it thinks that an EHC needs assessment is not needed. It **must** also tell you about:

- your right of appeal to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal and the time limit for appealing
- independent **disagreement resolution** and **mediation**
- how to get further information, advice or support.

If you disagree with the decision **SEND Family Partnership** can explain your options to you. **Contact 01785 356921 or email sfps@staffordshire.gov.uk**

What happens if the EHC needs assessment goes ahead?

The **SEND Code of Practice** says:

Local authorities must consult the child and the child's parent or the young person throughout the process of assessment and production of an EHC plan. They should also involve the child as far as possible in this process. The needs of the individual child and young person should sit at the heart of the assessment and planning process. (9.21)

The local authority will write to you to tell you what will happen and ask for your views. Your views and your child's views are really important. **SEND Family Partnership** can give you information, advice and support to help you with this. **Contact 01785 356921 or email sfps@staffordshire.gov.uk**

Staffordshire Local Authority will give you the contact details of the person who will be your SEND Keyworker and will work with you to explain the process throughout the assessment.

The local authority will ask a number of other people for information about your child. This is called 'advice' and it should include information about:

- your child's education, health and care needs
- the desired **outcomes** for your child
- the special educational, health and care provision that might be required to meet their needs and achieve the desired outcomes.

The local authority **must** ask for advice and information from:

- parents (or the young person)
- your child's early years setting or school
- an educational psychologist
- health professionals who work with your child. This might include a paediatrician, speech and language therapist, physiotherapist or occupational therapist.
- social care staff
- anyone else you ask them to contact who may be able to give relevant advice.

If your child has a vision or hearing impairment the local authority must also seek information and advice from a suitably qualified teacher.

The local authority should also try to find out your child's views. You, the school and other professionals may be able to help with this. If you think your child needs someone to help them give their views you can ask the **SEND Family Partnership** for more information about this.

In Staffordshire your SEND Keyworker will arrange a meeting in your child's school or setting, for you and any professionals involved with your child to gather information about their needs and agree outcomes. This information will be used to decide what provision is necessary and if the child requires an EHC plan.

You will receive a copy of all the reports when the needs assessment is finished.

If you want information, advice or support during the EHC needs assessment contact the **SEND Family Partnership**. This can include having an **Independent Supporter** to help you. You might like to look at our leaflet **Independent Support**.

You can find out more about advice and information for EHC needs assessments in the **SEND Code of Practice** sections 9.45 – 9.52.

What if some of this advice is already available?

Sometimes advice and information is already available because other professionals have been working with your child.

The **SEND Code of Practice** says:

The local authority **must not** seek further advice if such advice has already been provided (for any purpose) and the person providing the advice, the local authority and the child's parent or the young person are all satisfied that it is sufficient for the assessment process. In making this decision, the local authority and the person providing the advice should ensure the advice remains current. (9.47)

When does the EHC needs assessment end?

Once the local authority has all the information and advice it must decide whether your child needs an **Education, Health and Care plan**.

An EHC plan is a legal document written by the local authority. It describes the special educational needs that a child or young person has and the help that they will be given to meet them. It also includes the health and care provision that is needed. You can read more about EHC plans at www.staffordshirecares.info/send

Sometimes the local authority will decide that your child has special educational needs that can be met through **SEN support**. If this is the case the local authority must tell you of its decision within 16 weeks of receiving a request for an EHC needs assessment. The local authority must also tell you about your right of appeal.

If the local authority decides an EHC plan is necessary, it must first write a draft plan. It will send you the draft EHC plan and copies of the reports so that you can read it all. You should check that everything you think is important has been included and that you agree with the outcomes and the proposed provision. The local authority will also ask you which school you prefer your child to go to.

You have 15 days to make comments, to ask for a meeting or accept the draft plan.

Note that if you do not reply within 15 days the local authority may assume that you agree with the draft plan.

The last stage is for the local authority to send you the final EHC plan. If you are still unhappy with the plan or cannot agree with the local authority on a school, you have a right to go to mediation and/or to appeal.

If you need help at any stage you can contact the **SEND Family Partnership**. Telephone **01785 356921** or email sfps@staffordshire.gov.uk

How long does all this take?

The local authority receives a request for an EHC needs assessment. The authority must tell parents about this request	This is the start date
The local authority decides whether an EHC needs assessment is needed. The authority must tell parents about its decision	Within six weeks of the start date
The EHC needs assessment takes place	This starts as soon as the decision is made
EITHER	
The local authority tells the parents of the decision not to issue an EHC plan	Within 16 weeks of the start date
OR	
The local authority sends a draft EHC plan to parents	
Parents must respond to the draft EHC plan. They can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● agree that the draft is accurate ● ask for changes ● ask for a meeting. Parents also state a preference for a school or early years setting	Within 15 days of receiving the draft EHC plan
The local authority consults with the school or early years setting	Within 15 days of parents' response to the draft EHC plan
The local authority issues the final EHC plan	Within 20 weeks of the start date

Sometimes this timescale can be different. **See SEND Code of Practice** section 9.42.

What if I do not agree with the local authority about the EHC needs assessment or the EHC plan?

At any stage you can ask to talk to a member of the local authority's staff. This will usually be the named SEND Keyworker named in the letter the local authority sends to you.

If the local authority decides that an EHC needs assessment and EHC plan are necessary for your child, they must carry out the assessment and issue a plan whatever your views are.

The **SEND Family Partnership** can give you impartial information and advice about the options open to you, and support you through the process. This could include help from an **Independent Supporter**.

You also have a right to request independent **disagreement resolution** and, in some circumstances, **mediation**. You can find out more about disagreement resolution and mediation in the leaflet **What if I do not agree** and in the **SEND Code of Practice** Chapter 9.

My child already has a Statement. Will they have an EHC needs assessment?

Between September 2014 and September 2018 local authorities will gradually transfer **Statements of Special Educational Need** to the new system. When this happens for your child an EHC plan transfer review will take place.

The review will involve an EHC needs assessment. You, your child or the young person **must** be invited to a meeting as part of this transfer review.

Your child's existing Statement, review reports and other information may be sufficient for the needs assessment as long as you, the local authority and those providing the advice agree that they are. If you feel that they are not sufficient you can ask the local authority to gather more information and advice.

You can find out more in Staffordshire County Council's Education, Health and Care Transition Plan September 2014-April 2018 which is available on www.staffordshirecares.info/send

Where can I get more information, advice or support?

You can read about Education, Health and Care needs assessments in the **SEND Code of Practice** Chapter 9.

The **Local Offer** includes more information on the local arrangements for EHC needs assessments.

The **SEND Family Partnership** can give you:

- information about EHC needs assessments
- advice and support during the process of assessment
- details of the local arrangements for **Independent Support**
- details of other organisations, support groups and services that may be of help
- information, advice and support about your rights to make a complaint, seek independent **disagreement resolution** or **mediation**.



Staffordshire SEND Family Partnership Service is funded by Staffordshire County Council. It operates independently as a confidential service for parents and carers of children and young people (0 -25) with special educational needs and disabilities.

To contact the SEND Family Partnership (Staffordshire's Information, Advice and Support Service):

Tel: 01785 356921

Email: sfps@staffordshire.gov.uk

Facebook: Staffs SEND Family Partnership

You can find out more information at:

[www. www.staffordshire.gov.uk/sfps](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/sfps)

If you, or someone you know, would like a copy of this booklet in large print, Braille, on audio tape or in languages other than English, please contact SEND Family Partnership on 01785 356921 or email: sfps@staffordshire.gov.uk