

Education, Health & Care (EHC) needs assessments

This information is about Education, Health and Care needs assessments, it covers:

- children in early years settings
- children and young people in education, apprenticeships & training.

What is an EHC needs assessment?

An EHC needs assessment is a detailed look at the Special Educational Needs (SEN) of a child or young person 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 additional help they need to achieve outcomes identified by the assessment.

It includes information from:

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

The assessment is to see whether your child needs an **Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan)** to secure the right provision to meet their Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND).

When is an EHC needs assessment necessary?

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

Some children need more help than the 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)

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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. Immediately the local authority is aware that this is the case it must 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. [Solihull SENDIAS Service](#) can help you with this.

Other people, such as your doctor or a health visitor, can tell the local authority that they think your child needs an assessment.

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.

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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)

From receiving a request, the local authority has up to six weeks to decide whether to undertake a needs assessment.

In Solihull, the local authority has chosen to ask for information from both the educational setting and the parent/carers 'up front'. In other words, they want this information **before** they make a decision on whether a full EHC Needs Assessment is appropriate.

You will be asked to take part in a 'Family Conversation' meeting to capture your views. This meeting is usually led by the school SENCo and will be recorded on this [Family conversation](#) paperwork.

Important note: This should NOT just be sent to you to be completed. It is to be completed by a relevant professional during a planned meeting and should be a prompt to the type of information required, NOT a prescriptive form to be filled in. If there is a reason why the SENCo is not an appropriate person to carry out this meeting, another professional can be identified.

This stage of the process is really important. If you have any concerns, or want some help at the meeting, please contact [Solihull SENDIAS Service](#) who can give you further information, advice and support.

The information from school and parents is then considered by a 'panel' of officers at Solihull MBC; they will review the evidence, they have and tell you whether their decision is:- 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:

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

If you disagree with the decision [Solihull SENDIAS Service](#) can explain your options to you.

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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)

If, for some reason, your views have not yet been captured through the 'Family Conversation', this should take place without delay.

The local authority will also now 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
- Solihull Inclusion Support Service (SISS) or another teaching support service
- an Educational Psychologist (EP)
- health professionals who work with your child. This might include a Paediatrician, Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT), Physiotherapist or Occupational Therapist (OT).
- Social Care
- 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. You will have the chance to discuss your child with everyone involved in the needs assessment and 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 [Solihull SENDIAS Service](#). This can include having an **Independent Supporter** to help you.

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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 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 this in our information leaflet on 'Education, Health and Care plans'.

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 [Solihull SENDIAS](#) can support you to do this. 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 (see below).

If you need help at any stage you can contact [Solihull SENDIAS](#)

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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
<i>EITHER</i>	
The local authority tells the parents of the decision not to issue an EHC plan	Within 16 weeks of the start date
<i>OR</i>	
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 adequate • ask for changes • ask for a meeting. Parents have the right at this point to 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 person named in the letter the local authority sends to you when it receives a request for an EHC needs assessment.

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

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Solihull SENDIAS 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 our 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 there is not agreement that they are sufficient, the local authority must gather more information and advice.

You can find out more about the transition arrangements for Solihull in their **Local Transition Plan** and in our leaflet 'Transfer to an Education Health & Care Plan'

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.

Solihull SENDIAS 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**.

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Glossary of terms used in this leaflet

All terms that have been shown in **bold** type throughout this leaflet, are explained below. Relevant website addresses have also been provided as an alternative in case you are reading a hard copy of this leaflet.

Children and Families Act 2014	This law came into force on 1 st September 2014. Part 3 of the Act sets out the new law on special educational needs and disability. The Act is supported by the SEND Regulations 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 Years. You can download a copy of the Act at http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted
Disagreement resolution	Local authorities must provide independent disagreement resolution to help parents and young people resolve disputes with local authorities, schools and other settings about SEND duties and provision. You can find more about disagreement resolution in the SEND Code of Practice 11.6 to 11.10.
EHC Needs Assessment	The assessment is a detailed look at the special educational needs that the child or young person has and what help he or she may need in order to learn. It is sometimes called a statutory assessment. You can find out more in the SEND Code of Practice sections 9.45 – 9.52.
Education Health and Care plan (EHC plan)	An EHC plan 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. It is a legal document written by the local authority and is used for children and young people who have high support needs.
Family Conversation	<p>In Solihull, the local authority has chosen to capture parental views through a 'Family Conversation'. This will be a meeting usually led by the school SENCo (although another professional can be identified to do this if the SENCo is not appropriate).</p> <p>The views will be captured on a 'Family Conversation' document. Solihull's EHC information & paperwork can be viewed at http://socialsolihull.org.uk/localoffer/ehc-plans/</p> <p>The professional should complete this paperwork as part of the meeting and discussion. It is NOT intended to be sent to the parents for them to complete.</p>
First Tier Tribunal (SEN and disability)	The First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) is a legal body. The Tribunal hears appeals from parents of children with SEN, and young people with SEN, about EHC needs assessments and EHC plans. You can find out more & access the relevant forms at https://www.gov.uk/courts-tribunals/first-tier-

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	tribunal-special-educational-needs-and-disability
Independent supporter	A person recruited to help families going through an EHC needs assessment and the process of developing an EHC plan. This person is independent of the local authority who has received training, including legal training, to enable them to provide this support.
Local Offer	The Local Offer, published by every local authority, tells you what support is available for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and their families. It includes information about education, health and care provision. It also gives information about training, employment and independent living for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
Local transition plan	Every local authority must publish a plan explaining when and how Statements of SEN will be transferred to the new system, as well as information for young people in further education and training who received support as a result of through a Learning Difficulties Assessment.
Mediation	<p>Mediation is a type of disagreement resolution. Every local authority must provide independent mediation to help parents and young people resolve disputes with local authorities about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a decision not to carry out an EHC needs assessment • a decision not to draw up an EHC plan • the content of a final EHC plan or amended plan • a decision not to amend an EHC plan • a decision to cease to maintain an EHC plan. <p>Mediation must also be provided on the health and social care elements of an EHC plan. You can find more information on mediation in the SEND Code of Practice 11.13 to 11.38.</p>
Mediation advice	The purpose of mediation advice is to give information about what mediation involves. Parents or young people who wish to register an appeal with the First Tier Tribunal (SEN and Disability) must first seek mediation advice. The advice must be factual and unbiased. After mediation advice has been given the parent or young person can choose whether they wish to go to mediation. However it is not necessary to seek mediation advice if the appeal is only about the name of the school, or college named on the plan, the type of provision specified in the plan or the fact that no school or other institution is named. You can find more information on mediation advice in the SEND Code of Practice 11.21 to 11.25.

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Must	<p>The SEND Code of Practice says in Section i of the Introduction: <i>...where the text uses the word 'must' it refers to a statutory requirement under primary legislation, regulations or case law.</i></p> <p>This means that wherever the term 'must' is used all the organisations listed in Section iv of the Introduction to the Code have a legal duty to do what the Code says.</p>
Outcome	<p>Section 9.66 of the SEND Code of Practice says: <i>An outcome can be defined as the benefit or difference made to an individual as a result of an intervention. It should be personal and not expressed from a service perspective; it should be something that those involved have control and influence over, and while it does not always have to be formal or accredited, it should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound (SMART). When an outcome is focused on education or training, it will describe what the expected benefit will be to the individual as a result of the educational or training intervention provided.</i></p>
SEND Code of Practice	<p>This is the statutory guidance that supports Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014. It tells local authorities, early years settings, schools, colleges, health and social care providers and others what they must and should do to identify, assess and provide for children and young people with SEN or disabilities. You can download a full copy of the Code at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25 You can download a shorter version for parents at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-guide-for-parents-and-carers</p>
SEN support	<p>SEN support includes any help for children and young people with SEN that is additional to or different from the support generally made for other children of the same age. The purpose of SEN support is to help children achieve the outcomes or learning objectives that have been set for them by the school. Schools should involve parents in this process. SEN support replaces Early Years Action/Action Plus and School Action/Action Plus.</p>
SEND Tribunal	<p>See First Tier Tribunal (SEN and disability)</p>
Solihull SENDIAS	<p>We are your local SENDIAS Service (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice & Support Service).</p> <p>We are a statutory service that operates on a confidential and impartial basis.</p> <p>All our advisers have completed SEND Legal training accredited by</p>

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	<p>the Law Society and are either IAG Qualified or working towards.</p> <p>Our contact details are as follows:-</p> <p>Web: https://www.family-action.org.uk/solihullsendias</p> <p>Email: Solihullsendias@family-action.org.uk</p> <p>Tel: 0121 516 5173</p>
Statement of Special Educational Need	<p>Under the Education Act 1996 local authorities issued Statements of Special Educational Need for children whose needs could not be met through the provision normally made by schools.</p> <p>The Children and Families Act 2014 replaces Statements with EHC plans.</p> <p>Children and young people who already have a Statement will gradually transfer to the new system. Each council publishes a local transition plan to explain how this will happen.</p>
Transfer review	<p>A transfer review replaces the annual review in the academic year that the child or young person transfers to the new SEND system.</p> <p>A transfer review involves an EHC needs assessment to decide what outcomes and provision need to be included in the EHC plan. This should include education, health and social care needs.</p> <p>You, your child or the young person must be invited to a meeting as part of the transfer review.</p> <p>A transfer review ends when the local authority sends you (or the young person) a copy of the EHC plan, or when it informs you (or the young person) that an EHC plan will not be issued.</p> <p>Each council publishes a local transition plan to explain how and when transfer reviews for children and young people with Statements of Special Educational Need will happen.</p>