

Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments

Your child's school or other setting will often be able to meet their needs through SEN support. But sometimes a child or young person needs a more intensive level of specialist help that cannot be met from the resources available through SEN support. In these cases, you or your child's school/setting could consider asking your local authority for an Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment for your child. This assessment could lead to your child getting an EHC Plan. Some children and young people will have needs that clearly require an EHC needs assessment and plan and once the local authority is aware of them it should start this process without delay.

An EHC Plan brings your child's education, health and social care needs into a single, legal document. Your child must have special educational needs to be eligible for a plan.

Requesting an EHC needs assessment

You can ask your local authority for an EHC needs assessment if you think your child needs one. Anyone at your child's school (such as your child's teacher) can also ask for an assessment to be carried out. Others who work with your child can also tell the local authority if they think an assessment is needed (such as your doctor, health visitor or nursery worker).

Deciding whether to conduct an EHC needs assessment

Once your local authority identifies that your child has SEN or receives a request for an assessment, they have **up to six weeks** to decide whether to carry one out. During that time, they will ask you and others – such as your child's school or other setting – for information to help them make that decision. You may wish to gather together all the reports and letters from your child's school or other setting, doctors' and any other assessments that have been produced about your child. You may also want to write about your child's needs and how long they have had them.

If your local authority decides not to carry out an assessment, they need to let you know their decision and reason for refusing within six weeks of receiving a request for an assessment.

Conducting an EHC needs assessment

Local authorities need to make sure that you and your child are fully involved in the EHC needs assessment. They need to provide you with impartial information, advice and support to help you understand the process and make sure you are properly involved in decisions that affect your child. Hounslow SEND IASS can help with this.

The assessment includes talking to you and your child and finding out from you what support you think your child needs, and what goals you and your child have for his or her future. The assessment also includes seeking information and views from people who work with your child, such as class teachers, doctors and educational psychologists.

Deciding whether an EHC plan is needed

After your local authority has made its assessment, having involved you and your child fully in the process, it will then decide whether or not an EHC Plan is necessary. If they decide that an EHC Plan is not needed, they must tell you **within 16 weeks** of the date they received a request for an assessment.

Preparing an EHC plan

If your local authority decides to proceed with an EHC plan, they should work closely with you and your child to make sure the plan takes full account of your views, wishes and feelings. Once the plan has been written, a draft will be sent to you which must not contain the name of the school or other setting your child will attend. You will be given 15 days to comment on the draft and you can ask for a meeting to discuss it if you want one. At that point you will also be able to request a specific school, or other setting, you want your child to attend. This could be a mainstream school or special school. (For more help see our Choosing a School factsheet). The school will be given 15 days to reply to the local authority. Your local authority has **20 weeks** from the request for the EHC needs assessment to issue the final plan to you.

Once an EHC plan has been finalised, your local authority has to ensure that the special educational support in section F of the plan is provided, and the health service has to ensure the health support in section G is provided. This should help to enable your child to meet the outcomes that you have jointly identified and agreed. Your local authority has to review your child's EHC plan at least every 12 months. That review has to include working with you and your child and asking you what you think and what you want to happen, and a meeting which you must be invited to.

What you can do if you disagree with your local authority's decisions

If you disagree with your local authority's decisions on:

- not proceeding with an EHC needs assessment
- not producing an EHC plan, or
- the special educational support that is included in the EHC plan you have the right to challenge it.

You will have **two months** from the date of the local authority letter to challenge the decision. You can ask for mediation or appeal their decision, for more information see the Mediation/Appeal factsheet. Hounslow SEND IASS can help you.

The information in this factsheet can be found in Chapter 9 of the SEN Code of Practice.