LETTERS, RIGHTS AND COMPLAINTS | ENGLAND

Complaint Route Explainer Pack

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A plain-English explainer and worksheet to help you think about which complaints or challenge route may fit a problem, before you write.

It does not decide the route for you or give legal advice. Different problems need different paths, and deadlines can be short.

Who this is for

Families in England who know something has gone wrong and are not sure whether to use a school complaint, a local authority complaint, a SEND appeal, or another route.

What is inside

- A route-finding worksheet
- Cautions about deadlines
- Signposts to advice

Please read this first

This is a free starting-point resource from My SEND Friend. It is general information, not legal, medical or benefits advice, and it is not an official or government form. It does not guarantee an assessment, plan, adjustment, payment or any other outcome. Check current official guidance (for example GOV.UK) and get individual advice from SENDIASS, IPSEA or a suitably qualified adviser when you need it.

Different problems, different routes

A school complaints policy is often the starting point for how a school has handled a concern. Missing EHCP provision, a refusal to assess, or the contents of an EHC plan may belong in a different process, which can include mediation and an appeal to the First-tier Tribunal. Disability discrimination has its own rules. Ofsted is not usually a substitute for these routes.

Do not miss a deadline while you decide
If you have a decision letter with a right of appeal, get advice the same week if you can. A complaint might run in parallel, but it does not usually extend an appeal deadline.

My situation

What has gone wrong, in a few factual sentences

Do I have a decision letter? If so, what rights or deadlines does it mention?

Is this mainly about a school's day-to-day handling, a local authority process, an EHC plan, or something else?

Advice I will seek (SENDIASS, IPSEA, or another adviser) and the questions I will ask them

Useful next steps and sources

Use what helped in this pack and leave the rest. You can come back to it when you need to. Live tools on mysendfriend.co.uk remain free, including Help Me Now, the SEND Letter Builder, the Reasonable Adjustments Builder, the DLA and PIP Claim Planners, and the free resources hub. Saving work to My SEND Plan is optional.

Where to check official or independent information

Guidance and benefit rules can change. Check the current official position, and get individual advice when you need it.

- GOV.UK: Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- The SEND Code of Practice 2015 (England)
- The school's SEN information report and complaints policy
- Your local SENDIASS service
- IPSEA, for legally based information in England

A reminder about this free pack

This is a free starting-point resource from My SEND Friend. It is general information, not legal, medical or benefits advice, and it is not an official or government form. Using it does not start a statutory process or guarantee a particular outcome. Adapt every page to your situation.

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