LEARNING AND WORKBOOKS ENGLAND

New to SEND Reading and Planning Guide

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A calm, practical guide if you are new to SEND: what the main systems are, who can help, and a simple plan for the next few weeks.

This is general information for England unless you read a nation-specific note. It is not legal, medical or benefits advice, and it is not official guidance.

Who this is for

Parents and carers who have recently been told their child may have special educational needs or a disability, or who are starting to find their way around the system.

What is inside

- A map of the system in plain English
- Who can help
- A first-weeks planner
- A reading list that will not overwhelm you

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.

You do not have to learn everything at once

Families are often handed a pile of initials in a short conversation. You can go more slowly than the system sometimes expects. The most useful early steps are usually: write down what you already see, talk to the school or setting, find your local SENDIASS, and look after the ordinary things — sleep, food, and a little support for yourself — as best you can.

EHCP processes described here apply in England, under the Children and Families Act 2014, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014, and the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (2015). Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have different systems. Always check the current official position and any deadline on letters you receive.

The main pieces, in outline

The school or setting

This is usually the first place support should happen. Ask who the SENCO is, what they have already noticed, and what they will put in place and review.

SEN Support

Planned support from the school's ordinary resources, using a graduated approach. A child can be supported at this level without an EHCP, and without a diagnosis.

An EHC needs assessment and an EHCP

A formal local-authority process in England, if it may be necessary for provision to be made through an EHC plan. You can request an assessment. There are legal timescales. See the EHCP packs in this shop if you are at that point.

The Equality Act

Disabled children are protected from discrimination, and schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments. This can apply whether or not there is an EHCP.

Health and benefits

Health services and disability benefits (such as DLA) are separate from school plans, though the same needs may be relevant to all of them. Check current official guidance, and get advice before you apply.

Who can help

- Your local SENDIASS service — free and impartial information about SEND.
- The school SENCO, and the class teacher or key adult.
- IPSEA, for legally based information about SEND law in England.
- A welfare-rights service or Citizens Advice, for benefits questions.
- Your GP, and any health professionals already involved.
- Other families, and charities, used carefully alongside official information.

A first-weeks planner

What I already know, in everyday words, about my child's needs and strengths

Who I will speak to at school or in the setting, and what I will ask

The advice services I will contact, and the questions I will take to them

Any letters or reports I will gather and keep in one place

One practical thing I will do for my child this week, and one for myself

If you want to read more, start small

Official sources include GOV.UK pages on children with SEND, and the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (2015). You do not have to read the Code from start to finish. The New to SEND Starter Kit in this shop gathers practical tools in one download. If a page on mysendfriend.co.uk helps, use it. If it does not, leave it for later.

The three things I will do next, in an order I can keep

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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