LEARNING AND WORKBOOKS ENGLAND

SEND Jargon Buster

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A plain-English guide to common SEND words and initials, with a short space to note terms from your own letters and plans.

This is general information, not a legal glossary. Official wording and systems can change, and they differ across the UK.

Who this is for

Parents, carers, young people and supporters who want to feel less lost in the language of meetings and letters.

What is inside

- How to use the buster
- Plain-English explanations of common terms
- A page for your own words

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.

How to use this jargon buster

SEND is full of initials. This pack explains common terms in plain English, with a England focus where the law is different elsewhere. It is a starting point, not a legal dictionary. Rules and official names can change. If a decision letter uses a word you do not know, you can also ask the person who wrote it, or SENDIASS, to explain it.

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.

SEN / SEND

Special educational needs, or special educational needs and disabilities. A child has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability that means they need special educational provision. Disability has its own meaning under the Equality Act 2010.

SEN Support

The support a mainstream school or setting should provide from its ordinary resources, using a graduated approach, when a child has SEN but does not have (or does not need) an EHC plan. It is not a formal legal "status" in the same way as an EHCP.

Graduated approach / APDR

Assess, Plan, Do, Review: a cycle of understanding needs, planning support, putting it in place, and reviewing it. It should be repeated, not done once and forgotten.

SENCO

The special educational needs coordinator in a school or setting: the teacher or leader with responsibility for coordinating SEN provision. In some settings the title may differ.

EHCP

An Education, Health and Care Plan in England: a legal document that describes a child or young person's needs and the provision that must be made. Other UK nations have different plans and names.

EHC needs assessment

The assessment a local authority in England carries out when it may be necessary for special educational provision to be made in accordance with an EHC plan. A parent, a young person, or a school can request it.

Section A to K

The usual parts of an EHC plan in England, including the child's views and family views (A), needs (B, C, D), outcomes (E), provision (F, G, H), placement (I), personal budget (J), and advice gathered (K). Not every conversation needs every letter.

Section F

The special educational provision in an EHC plan. It should be specific and quantified where it needs to be, so it is clear what must be provided.

Annual review

The review of an EHC plan that must usually happen at least once a year (and more often for some younger children). It is a process, not only a meeting.

Draft plan

A proposed EHC plan sent for comment before it is finalised. In England you should have at least 15 days to make representations and to request a particular school or other setting.

Working document

A version of a draft or disputed plan, often used in appeals, where changes are marked and discussed. It is a working tool, not a magic form.

EOTAS

Education otherwise than at school. In England, in some circumstances a local authority can arrange education otherwise than in a school or post-16 institution. It is specific and unusual — get advice before relying on it.

Reasonable adjustments

Changes a school or other body may need to make under the Equality Act 2010 so a disabled person is not substantially disadvantaged. The duty can apply whether or not there is an EHCP.

Access arrangements

Adjustments for exams, organised through the school and, where relevant, an exam board and JCQ guidance. Eligibility is assessed by the school, not by this shop.

SENDIASS

The Information, Advice and Support Service in each local area: free, impartial information for families and young people about SEND.

Tribunal

In England, the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) can hear certain appeals about EHC needs assessments and plans, and some disability discrimination claims. Deadlines are short. Get advice.

Mediation

A meeting with a mediator that is part of the route to some SEND appeals in England. A mediation certificate is often needed before an appeal, but not always — check your decision letter and current rules.

Local offer

The information a local authority in England must publish about provision for children and young people with SEND in its area.

DLA / PIP

Disability Living Allowance for children, and Personal Independence Payment usually from age 16, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Scotland has different payments. These are benefits about extra needs, not school plans.

EBSA

Emotionally based school avoidance (or a similar phrase): a description used when a child is struggling to attend because of anxiety or unmet need. It is not a formal diagnosis.

Questions families often ask

You do not need to memorise every term. You do need to know which document you are looking at, who is responsible for what, and when a deadline might apply. If you are unsure, get advice before a deadline passes.

A word or initials I have seen and still want explained

Where I saw it (a letter, a meeting, a plan), and who I will ask

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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