EHCP AND ASSESSMENTS | ENGLAND

SEND Process Map (plain English, England)

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A plain-English walk through request, assessment, draft, final EHCP, annual review and the usual routes if you disagree, with typical timescales in England clearly labelled as usual rather than official for your case.

This is a map to help you see the path, not a substitute for the Code of Practice or advice about your own facts.

Who this is for

Families in England who want a calm overview of the EHCP path before they use the more detailed packs, or who want a page they can keep at the front of a folder.

What is inside

- A stage-by-stage explanation
- Usual timescales, with cautions
- Signposts to advice and to other My SEND Friend packs

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.

A map, not a promise

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.

Not every family will use every stage. Many children are supported at SEN Support without an EHC plan. This map is for when you are looking at the statutory EHCP path, or trying to understand a letter you have received.

1. Request

A parent, a young person, or a school can request an EHC needs assessment (section 36 of the Children and Families Act 2014). You do not need a diagnosis or the school's permission. Keep a dated copy. See the EHC Needs Assessment Request Pack.

2. Decision whether to assess

A local authority in England must usually notify you of its decision whether to carry out an EHC needs assessment within six weeks of receiving the request, under regulation 5 of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014, subject to any exceptions that may apply. Check the date your request was received and the date on any decision letter. If the answer is no, the letter should explain why and tell you about mediation and appeal. Deadlines can be short. See the Refusal to Assess Response Pack and get advice if you may challenge the decision.

3. Assessment

If the authority agrees to assess, it gathers advice, including your views and the child's or young person's views. You can use the parent and child views workbooks and the evidence organiser.

Draft, final plan, review and disagreement

4. Draft plan

If the authority decides to issue a plan, you should receive a draft and have at least 15 days to comment and to request a particular placement. Use the Draft EHCP Quality Checker and the vague wording checklist. Check the date on the letter.

5. Final plan

Where an assessment goes ahead, the usual overall timescale in England from request to a final EHC plan is 20 weeks, subject to the Regulations and any exceptions. This pack does not calculate your deadline. Once final, the plan is a legal document. Special educational provision specified in it must be secured. If you disagree with certain decisions, there are formal routes, often including mediation and an appeal to the First-tier Tribunal. Get advice quickly.

6. Annual review

The plan must be reviewed at least every 12 months. Use the Annual Review Preparation Pack. If provision is not being delivered, keep a factual record and seek advice — see the missing provision tracker and Section F tracker.

If you are not sure where you are on this map

Use Help Me Now on mysendfriend.co.uk, or contact your local SENDIASS service. IPSEA provides legally based information in England. My SEND Friend is not a helpline and cannot give individual legal advice.

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)
- GOV.UK: SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (2015)
- Children and Families Act 2014, and the SEND Regulations 2014
- Your local SENDIASS service (free and impartial)
- IPSEA, for legally based information about SEND law 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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