



A Parent's Guide: How to Get Your Child or Young Person (Aged 5+) Diagnosed with SEND

RANi Need to Know Guides | SEND in Early years and young person Advisory sheet 8

Updated: April 2025

If you have concerns about your child's learning, behaviour, communication, or emotional wellbeing, you may wonder whether they have an underlying need such as **Autism**, **ADHD**, **Dyslexia**, or another **Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND)**. Getting a diagnosis can help you better understand their needs and secure appropriate support.

Step-by-Step: How to Seek a Diagnosis

1. Recognise the Signs

Children and young people might show:

- **Communication delays** or difficulties

Disclaimer: This resource is intended to provide general information and should not be considered legal advice. While RANi strives to ensure the content is accurate and current at the time of publication, we cannot accept responsibility for any loss, damage, or inconvenience that may result from using or relying on the information provided.

- Trouble with **learning, reading, or writing**
- **High anxiety**, low mood, or social isolation
- **Sensory sensitivities** or repetitive behaviours
- **Impulsivity**, difficulty concentrating, or hyperactivity
- Struggles with routines, transitions, or friendships

These may point to underlying needs like Autism, ADHD, Speech and Language Disorder, Dyslexia, or other learning differences.

2. Speak to the School or Setting

Start by raising your concerns with your child's:

- **Class teacher**
- **Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)**
- **Head of Year or Pastoral Lead** (in secondary)

Ask:

- Have they noticed similar challenges?
- What support is already in place?
- Could a professional assessment help?

If your child masks difficulties in school but struggles at home, be clear about what you're seeing outside of school.

Disclaimer: This resource is intended to provide general information and should not be considered legal advice. While RANi strives to ensure the content is accurate and current at the time of publication, we cannot accept responsibility for any loss, damage, or inconvenience that may result from using or relying on the information provided.

3. Request Professional Referrals

You (or the school) can request referrals to:

- **Speech and Language Therapist (SALT)**
- **Educational Psychologist (EP)**
- **Community Paediatrician** (for neurodevelopmental assessments)
- **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)**
- **Occupational Therapist (OT)**

Referrals may be made through:

- **The school or SENCO**
- **Your GP**
- **Early Help or Local Authority Panel** (depending on your area)

It's a good idea to write down your concerns and examples to take to appointments.

4. Visit Your GP

Your **GP** can help rule out medical causes and refer your child to:

- **Community Paediatrics** (for Autism, ADHD, developmental concerns)
- **CAMHS** (for anxiety, emotional regulation, or behavioural issues)

Disclaimer: This resource is intended to provide general information and should not be considered legal advice. While RANi strives to ensure the content is accurate and current at the time of publication, we cannot accept responsibility for any loss, damage, or inconvenience that may result from using or relying on the information provided.

When you go:

- Bring notes of concerns (what, when, how long, impact)
- Share any reports or letters from school
- Mention any family history of SEND or neurodivergence

Wait times for assessments vary. You can ask to be added to a waiting list and follow up if needed.

5. Consider Private Assessments (if appropriate and affordable)

Some families choose private assessments to:

- Reduce waiting times
- Access specific screening tools (e.g., for Dyslexia, ADHD, Autism)

Examples:

- **Private Educational Psychologist:** for learning profiles, cognitive testing
- **Speech and Language Therapist**
- **Private Autism or ADHD assessments** (clinical psychologists or paediatricians)

Check that any provider is **qualified**, registered with the **HCPC** or **GMC**, and that their reports are accepted by schools and the local authority.

Disclaimer: This resource is intended to provide general information and should not be considered legal advice. While RANi strives to ensure the content is accurate and current at the time of publication, we cannot accept responsibility for any loss, damage, or inconvenience that may result from using or relying on the information provided.

6. Understand the Diagnostic Process

Depending on the concern, diagnosis might involve:

- Parent and school questionnaires (e.g. for ADHD/Autism)
- Observations in different settings
- Interviews or assessments with the child
- Standardised tests (e.g. for Dyslexia or cognitive delay)

Diagnosis is typically made by:

- A **multidisciplinary team** (Autism)
 - A **paediatrician or psychiatrist** (ADHD)
 - A **specialist teacher or psychologist** (Dyslexia, dyspraxia)
-

What If the School Doesn't Agree?

Even if the school does not believe an assessment is needed, **you have a right to seek your own referrals** through the GP or private routes.

You can also:

- **Request an EHC needs assessment** from your local authority (you do not need a diagnosis to do this)
- Contact **SENDIASS** in your area for advice

Disclaimer: This resource is intended to provide general information and should not be considered legal advice. While RANi strives to ensure the content is accurate and current at the time of publication, we cannot accept responsibility for any loss, damage, or inconvenience that may result from using or relying on the information provided.

Important Points to Know

- A **diagnosis is not needed** to receive SEN Support or an EHC plan **it's about the child's needs**, not the label.
 - **Delays in assessment** are common, but you can ask for interim support while waiting.
 - **Keep a diary** or log of your concerns and the steps you've taken – it will be helpful for referrals and assessments.
-
-

Support and Resources

You can get further support from:

- **RANi** – Help with advice, support and impartial information
- **Local Offer** - Help with advice, support and impartial information
- NHS websites (search for ADHD, Autism, developmental assessments)
- [Autism.org.uk](https://www.autism.org.uk)
- British Dyslexia Association
- ADHD Foundation
- **SENDIASS** – Local impartial information and advice service for parents and young people www.iasmanchester.org
- **IPSEA** – Independent Provider of Special Education Advice: www.ipsea.org.uk
- **Contact** – A national charity supporting families with disabled children: www.contact.org.uk

Disclaimer: This resource is intended to provide general information and should not be considered legal advice. While RANi strives to ensure the content is accurate and current at the time of publication, we cannot accept responsibility for any loss, damage, or inconvenience that may result from using or relying on the information provided.

If you'd like help preparing your request or understanding your appeal options, RANi can provide guidance and templates.

Remember:

Always keep a copy of all correspondence you send, along with proof of postage or delivery. If you send documents by post, we recommend using a **signed-for** service. If sending by email, request a **read receipt** if possible.

Get in Touch

If you need more information or have a question, we're here to help.

Email us: info@rani.org.uk

Please include:

- Your name
- Your child's name
- Your child's date of birth
- Your query

Or, if you prefer, you can fill out our online **contact form** and we'll get back to you as soon as possible.

Disclaimer: This resource is intended to provide general information and should not be considered legal advice. While RANi strives to ensure the content is accurate and current at the time of publication, we cannot accept responsibility for any loss, damage, or inconvenience that may result from using or relying on the information provided.

Disclaimer: This resource is intended to provide general information and should not be considered legal advice. While RANi strives to ensure the content is accurate and current at the time of publication, we cannot accept responsibility for any loss, damage, or inconvenience that may result from using or relying on the information provided.