



# Guide to Applying for an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Needs Assessment

**RANi Need to Know Guides | EHCP Advisory sheet 2**

*Updated: April 2025*

*A comprehensive guide for parents, carers, and young people on applying for an Education, Health and Care needs assessment.*

---

## 1. What Is an EHC Needs Assessment?

An Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment is a legal process carried out by the local authority to determine whether a child or young person requires an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP). The purpose of the assessment is to build a clear picture of the child or young person's special educational needs (SEN), the support they require, and whether that support needs to be provided through an EHCP.

An EHCP is a legal document that describes a child or young person's educational, health, and social care needs and sets out the support that must be provided to meet those needs.

---

**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.

## 2. Who Can Request an EHC Needs Assessment?

The following people can make a formal request for an EHC needs assessment:

- A parent or carer of a child (aged 0–16)
- A young person themselves if they are over the age of 16 and under 25
- A school, college, or early years setting (with or without the parent or young person's agreement)

You do not need the school's agreement to make a request as a parent or young person. Other professionals (such as a GP or social worker) may also bring a child to the local authority's attention, but they cannot make a formal request in the same way as those listed above.

---

## 3. When Should You Apply for an EHC Needs Assessment?

You should consider applying for an EHC needs assessment if:

- Your child is not making expected progress despite receiving SEN support
- Their needs are complex, long-term, or increasing
- The current level of support is not enough to help them access and benefit from education
- You believe your child may require additional support that cannot be provided from the resources usually available within the setting

You do not need to wait for a diagnosis or for the school to try every possible strategy. The law does not require that all support options be exhausted before an application is made.

---

## 4. What Is the Legal Test the Local Authority Must Apply?

Under Section 36(8) of the Children and Families Act 2014, the local authority must carry out an EHC needs assessment if:

1. The child or young person **may have special educational needs**, and
2. They **may need special educational provision to be made through an EHC plan**

**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.

This is a low threshold. It is enough that the child or young person *might* have SEN and *might* need an EHCP. The local authority must not demand evidence that an EHCP is definitely needed before agreeing to assess.

A refusal to assess must be based on this legal test—not on limited resources, budget issues, or the child already receiving SEN support.\

---

## 5. How to Request an EHC Needs Assessment

To request an EHC needs assessment, you should write to your local authority's Special Educational Needs (SEN) team. It is helpful to send your request by email or recorded delivery.

**Your request should include:**

- Your name and contact details
- Your child's name, date of birth, and current setting (e.g., school or nursery)
- A brief explanation of your child's needs
- Why you believe an EHC needs assessment is necessary
- Any relevant supporting documents (if available)

A template letter is available to help you make the request in the correct format.

---

## 6. What Happens Next? The Assessment Timeline

The assessment process has specific legal timeframes. These are:

- **Week 0:** You make the request for assessment
- **By Week 6:** The local authority must inform you in writing whether they will carry out the assessment
- **Weeks 6–16:** If agreed, professionals will be asked to provide reports and advice (including educational, medical, psychological, and parental views)
- **By Week 16:** The local authority must decide whether to issue an EHC plan
- **By Week 20:** If agreed, the final EHC plan must be issued

If the local authority refuses at any stage, they must provide written reasons and information about how to appeal.

---

**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.

## 7. What Evidence Is Useful?

While you do not need a full suite of professional reports to apply, it is helpful to include any relevant evidence you already have. This might include:

- School or nursery reports, records of SEN support, or Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
  - Educational psychology reports
  - Speech and language therapy or occupational therapy assessments
  - Paediatric or mental health reports (e.g. CAMHS)
  - Letters from professionals involved in your child's care
  - Your own written observations, concerns, and evidence of how your child's needs affect their learning and wellbeing
- 

## 8. What If the Local Authority Refuses to Assess?

If your local authority refuses to carry out an assessment:

- They must provide you with written reasons for their decision
- They must tell you about your right to appeal to the SEND Tribunal
- They must provide mediation information

You can appeal this decision to the SEND Tribunal. You must register your appeal within 2 months of the decision letter, or within 1 month of receiving a mediation certificate—whichever is later.

You do not have to go through mediation, but you must obtain a mediation certificate before appealing. This is usually done by contacting a mediation adviser who will provide the certificate, whether or not you choose to participate.

---

## 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
- **SENDIASS** – Local impartial information and advice service for parents and young people [www.iasmanchester.org](http://www.iasmanchester.org)

**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.

- **IPSEA** – Independent Provider of Special Education Advice:  
[www.ipsea.org.uk](http://www.ipsea.org.uk)
- **Contact** – A national charity supporting families with disabled children:  
[www.contact.org.uk](http://www.contact.org.uk)

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](mailto: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.