



# A Detailed Guide to the SEND Code of Practice 2015 (0–25 years)

RANi Need to Know Guides | SEN and Disability: Statute Law, Regulations, and Guidance Advisory sheet 2

*Updated: April 2025*

*A detailed guide for Parents, Carers and Young Persons*

*The **Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice 2015** is statutory guidance that supports the implementation of **Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014** and the **SEN and Disability Regulations 2014**. It applies to **England only** and covers **children and young people aged 0–25 with SEN and/or disabilities**.*

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## 1. What Is the SEND Code of Practice?

The **SEND Code of Practice** explains the duties of:

- Local authorities (LAs)
- Educational settings (early years, schools, colleges)

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- Health services
- Social care providers

It provides **practical guidance** on identifying, assessing, and meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND, and sets expectations for **person-centred, coordinated planning**.

**Statutory guidance** means that organisations must follow it unless there's a lawful reason not to.

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## 2. Who Does It Apply To?

The Code applies to:

- Early years providers
- State-funded schools and academies
- Further education (FE) colleges and sixth forms
- Local authorities
- Health commissioners and professionals
- Social care services

It covers **children and young people from birth to age 25**, provided they remain in education or training.

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## 3. Core Principles of the Code

The Code promotes a **person-centred**, inclusive approach.

### Key Principles:

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- **Children and young people’s views, wishes and feelings must be central.**
  - Parents, carers, and young people should participate fully in decisions.
  - Early identification and intervention are vital.
  - Support should enable independence and preparation for adulthood.
  - Services should work together in a **coordinated way** across education, health, and care.
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## 4. What Is Special Educational Provision?

Under the Code:

Special educational provision is support that is “**additional to or different from**” that normally provided in mainstream settings.

This includes:

- Targeted teaching approaches
  - Specialist input or therapies
  - Individual or small group interventions
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## 5. Graduated Approach to SEN Support

In mainstream schools and settings, SEN support follows a **graduated approach**:

### **Assess – Plan – Do – Review cycle:**

1. **Assess:** Identify the child’s needs.

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2. **Plan:** Agree support and expected outcomes.
3. **Do:** Put support in place.
4. **Review:** Evaluate progress and adjust as needed.

This process should be ongoing and involve the **child or young person and their family** at every stage.

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## 6. Education, Health and Care (EHC) Needs Assessment and Plan

The Code sets out when and how a local authority must carry out an **EHC needs assessment**, which may lead to an **EHC plan**.

### EHC Needs Assessment:

- Required when a child may need more support than SEN support alone can provide.
- LA must seek advice from education, health, and social care.
- Legal timescale: 20 weeks from request to final EHC plan.

### EHC Plan:

- A legal document that must specify the child's needs, outcomes, and provision.
  - Includes Sections A–K (including health and care if needed).
  - Reviewed **at least annually**.
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## 7. Joint Working: Education, Health and Care

The Code expects **joined-up planning**:

- Local authorities and health services must have **joint commissioning arrangements**.
  - Health provision in Section G of an EHC plan is enforceable under the NHS Act 2006.
  - Social care provision must be specified (Sections H1 and H2).
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## 8. Key Duties for Educational Settings

**Schools and colleges must:**

- Use “**best endeavours**” to meet SEN (CFA 2014, s.66).
  - Designate a **SENCO** (Special Educational Needs Coordinator).
  - Inform parents when SEN provision is being made.
  - Publish a **SEN Information Report** on their website.
  - Have an inclusive admissions and curriculum policy.
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## 9. Transition and Preparation for Adulthood

From Year 9 onwards, reviews of EHC plans must include a focus on:

- Employment and training
- Independent living

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- Participating in society
- Being as healthy as possible

The Code supports **early planning** for transitions, including:

- Starting school
  - Moving from primary to secondary
  - Leaving school for college, apprenticeships or supported internships
  - Transitioning from children's to adult services
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## 10. Mediation, Appeals and Complaints

The Code outlines:

- Right to mediation before appealing to the SEND Tribunal.
  - How to appeal decisions on EHC assessments, plans, and placements.
  - Role of **Disagreement Resolution** services.
  - Complaint routes for education, health, and social care.
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## 11. Personal Budgets

The Code provides guidance on:

- Requesting a **Personal Budget** (for education, health, or care provision).
- Direct payments or third-party arrangements.

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- Involvement in planning how the budget is used.
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## 12. Important Chapters in the Code

Chapter	Contents
1	Principles and definitions
2–4	Roles of early years, schools, and colleges
5	SEN Support in schools
6	Further education settings
7	EHC needs assessments and plans
8	Annual reviews, phase transfers
9	Joint commissioning and personal budgets
10	Resolving disagreements and Tribunal
11	Transitions and preparing for adulthood

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## 13. SEND Code and Mental Capacity

From age 16, young people are presumed to have the **mental capacity** to make decisions unless proven otherwise. The Code aligns with the **Mental Capacity Act 2005**, allowing parents or representatives to act in the young person's best interests if they lack capacity.

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## 14. Accessing the Code

You can access or download the SEND Code of Practice from GOV.UK:  
SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (2015)

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## Summary: Why the Code Matters

The SEND Code of Practice ensures that **children, young people and families are placed at the heart of SEND support**. It promotes inclusion, early help, joined-up working, and legal accountability.

**If a setting or local authority fails to follow the Code**, and you are negatively affected, you may be able to:

- Challenge it through complaints, appeals, or judicial review.
  - Seek legal advice or help from a SEND advice service
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## 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)
- **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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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