



Understanding the Education, Health and Care (EHC) Needs Assessment Process

RANi Need to Know Guides | EHCP Advisory sheet 3

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A comprehensive guide for parents, carers, and young people on understanding the process of an Education, Health and Care needs assessment.

What is an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Needs Assessment?

An EHC needs assessment is a legal process carried out by a Local Authority to determine whether a child or young person (aged 0 to 25) requires an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The EHCP is a legally binding document that sets out a child or young person's special educational needs (SEN), the provision required to meet those needs, and the outcomes they aim to achieve across education, health, and care.

The assessment is the first step toward ensuring that children and young people with complex or significant needs receive the right support in a coordinated, holistic way.

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.

Who Can Request an EHC Needs Assessment?

You can make a request if:

- You are the parent or carer of a child aged 0–16
- You are a young person aged 16–25 making the request on your own behalf
- A person acting on behalf of a school, college or early years provider (with parental knowledge)

Other professionals such as GPs, social workers, or health visitors can also bring concerns to the local authority's attention.

When Should an EHC Needs Assessment Be Considered?

A request should be made when:

- A child or young person is not making expected progress despite receiving SEN support
- Their needs are complex, long-term, and require more support than what is ordinarily available through school resources
- There is evidence that the current provision is not meeting their needs
- Additional input from health or social care professionals is required

The legal test under the Children and Families Act 2014 is:

"The local authority must carry out an EHC needs assessment if the child or young person may have special educational needs and it may be necessary for special educational provision to be made via an EHC plan."

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How to Request an EHC Needs Assessment

Requests should be made in writing to the local authority's Special Educational Needs (SEN) department. A clear and well-evidenced request helps. It should include:

- A description of the child/young person's difficulties
- What support has already been provided
- The impact of that support
- Why you believe an EHCP is needed

Include reports from professionals (e.g., speech and language therapists, educational psychologists), school support plans, records of interventions, and your own views as a parent or young person.

What Happens After the Request Is Made?

Stage 1: Local Authority Decision (Within 6 Weeks)

The local authority must decide whether or not to carry out an assessment. They will consider:

- The evidence submitted
- Reports from the educational setting
- Views of the child or young person and parents
- Any existing professional input

If they refuse, they must give reasons in writing and explain how to appeal.

Stage 2: The Assessment Process (Weeks 7–16)

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If agreed, the local authority will seek advice from:

- Parents or the young person
- The current educational setting
- An educational psychologist
- Health and social care professionals
- Anyone else reasonably requested (e.g., specialist teachers, therapists)

You must be consulted and involved in this process.

What Happens After the Assessment?

Stage 3: Decision on Whether to Issue an EHCP (Week 16)

The local authority will decide whether the child or young person needs an EHCP. If they decide not to issue a plan, you have the right to appeal.

If they decide to issue an EHCP:

Stage 4: Draft Plan and Consultation (Weeks 17–20)

You will receive a draft EHCP to review. You have 15 days to:

- Make comments or request changes
- Express a preference for a school or college to be named

The local authority must consult with that institution.

Final EHCP and Beyond (Week 20)

The local authority must issue the final plan within 20 weeks from the date they received the original request.

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Once the EHCP is issued:

- It must be reviewed annually
 - It is a legally binding document
 - You have a right to appeal its contents (e.g., the school named or the provision)
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If the Local Authority Refuses the Assessment or Plan

You have the right to appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (SEND Tribunal) if:

- The local authority refuses to assess
- They assess but refuse to issue an EHCP
- You disagree with the contents of the EHCP

You may be required to consider mediation first unless the appeal is only about the placement in Section I.

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
- **IPSEA** – Independent Provider of Special Education Advice: www.ipsea.org.uk
- **Contact** – A national charity supporting families with disabled children: 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.

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.

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