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Is it time to request an EHCP?

A checklist and timeline for parents in England

Who this guide is for



Deciding whether to request an Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment can feel like a big step.

This guide is for parents and carers in England who are worried that their child's needs are not fully being met at school and are wondering whether to request an EHC needs assessment.

It is especially useful if your child is already receiving SEN Support or receives extra help in school but you are unsure whether an EHCP might now be appropriate.

How to use this guide

On page 2 you will find a simple checklist about your child's needs, the support they already receive and the impact on their learning and wellbeing.

Then use page 3 to see the legal timeline for the EHCP process so you know what to expect once a request has been made.

This guide does not replace individual legal advice, but it can help you feel more prepared and confident when deciding your next step.

"Every child can-with the right support."



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Checklist: Is it time to ask for an EHC needs assessment?



Work through the statements below and tick 'Yes' or 'No' for each one. There is no set score but if you are ticking 'Yes' to several items in each section, it suggests that an EHC needs assessment may now be appropriate.

Section A: Your child's needs

Your child's needs	Yes	No
My child is significantly behind age-related expectations in one or more core areas (for example reading, writing, maths, or communication)		
My child's difficulties have continued over time, even though school has tried different kinds of support		
My child needs a high level of adult support or adaptation to manage in the classroom (for example visual supports, reduced demands, sensory adjustments)		
My child's anxiety, behaviour, or emotional regulation is having a clear impact on their ability to access learning.		
One or more professionals (for example paediatrician, CAMHS, speech and language therapist, educational psychologist) have raised concerns about long-term or complex needs		

Section B: Current support in school

Current support in school	Yes	No
My child is on the school's SEN register or has an individual plan in place.		
The school has put extra support in place (for example interventions, small-group work, or additional adult time)		
The school has tried different strategies over a period of time, but progress or wellbeing is still a concern		
My child needs more support than school can typically provide from its usual resources.		

Section C: Impact and future

Impact and future	Yes	No
My child's needs are affecting attendance, behaviour, friendships or self-esteem		
I am worried about how my child will cope with upcoming transitions (for example moving class or school)		
I feel that current support is not enough to meet my child's needs in a sustained way.		
I often find myself having repeated, ongoing discussions with school about support, with limited change		

If you have ticked 'Yes' to several statements in each section, this suggests that your child's needs may require support beyond what the school can normally provide from its own resources. In these circumstances, it may be appropriate to request an Education, Health and Care needs assessment from your Local Authority.



EHCP process: key stages and legal timeline

In England, the whole process from request for an EHC needs assessment to the issue of a final Education, Health and Care Plan should normally take no more than 20 weeks, except in limited circumstances.



Stage 1 – Request made (Week 0)

- ✧ A parent, young person, or school sends a written request for an EHC needs assessment to the Local Authority.
- ✧ The request should explain the child's needs, what support is currently in place, and why an assessment is being asked for now (see sample letter).

Stage 2 – Decision to assess (By Week 6)

- ✧ The Local Authority gathers initial information and must decide whether to carry out a full EHC needs assessment.
- ✧ By the end of Week 6, the Local Authority should write to you to confirm whether it will assess or not.
- ✧ If the decision is **not** to assess, you have the right to consider mediation and appeal (within 2 months).

Stage 3 – Needs assessment (Weeks 6-16)

- ✧ If agreed the Local Authority seeks detailed advice from you, the child or young person (where appropriate), the school, and specialist professionals such as educational psychology, health and social care.
- ✧ This advice is used to understand your child's needs, the outcomes that are sought, and the provision that may be required.

Stage 4 – Decision on issuing an EHCP (By Week 16)

- ✧ By around Week 16, the Local Authority must decide whether to issue an EHCP.
- ✧ If it decides to issue, it should send you a draft plan. If it decides not to issue, it should explain the reasons and you will have a right to appeal.

Stage 5 – Draft plan and final plan (Weeks 16–20)

- ✧ You have 15 days to comment on the draft plan, request changes, and express a preference for a school or other setting.
- ✧ The Local Authority consults with the school you have requested and considers any changes needed to the plan.
- ✧ The final EHCP should normally be issued by the end of Week 20.
- ✧ If you do not agree with section B, F or I, you can appeal (within 2 months)

In practice, some Local Authorities do not always meet these timescales. If deadlines are missed or you disagree with a decision, you can seek advice about your options, including appeal rights.



