



Special Educational Needs Support in School



A guide for parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs who attend a mainstream school in Sheffield

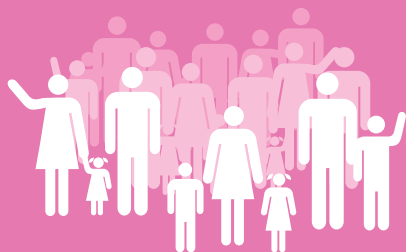
**Written by parents,
for parents!**

March 2017



About us

Sheffield Parent Carer Forum is a parent-led charity which brings together over 1,300 families with children and young people (aged 0-25 years) with special educational needs and disabilities from across Sheffield to provide mutual support, share information, and influence policy and practice.



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Membership is FREE and gives you access to:

- Free email bulletins and newsletters packed full of 'insider' information
- Inclusive events, such as pantos, trampolining sessions and family fun days
- A free information and signposting service
- Free information and training sessions for parents
- An influential group working to improve services for our children

Get in touch

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Website:
www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

Facebook:
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What are Special Educational Needs?

A child or young person has special educational needs (SEN) if they have a learning difficulty or disability which means that they need special educational provision. Special educational provision is provision which is different from, or additional to, that which is normally available to pupils of the same age.

Having a learning difficulty or disability means that a pupil has significantly greater difficulty in learning than most pupils of the same age, or a disability which makes it more difficult for them to use the school facilities. For example, they may have problems with:

- Specific areas of learning, like reading, writing or number work
- Expressing themselves or understanding what others are saying
- Making friends or relating to adults
- Managing their emotions or behaviour
- Problems with seeing, hearing, or moving around
- Medical conditions that impact on learning
- Mental health difficulties, e.g. anxiety or depression

Having SEN is very common; in Sheffield, 16% of the school population (around 13,000 pupils) have SEN. Not all children with SEN have a formal diagnosis.

Children who struggle at school for other reasons – for example, because they have suffered a bereavement, or because English is not their first language – would not be regarded as having SEN. Support for these children is provided through different routes.

Behavioural difficulties are often a symptom of unidentified SEN, but they can also be caused by external factors, such as housing issues, trauma or family conflict. Schools should seek to identify and address the underlying causes of the behaviour in partnership with other agencies.



Who's who in SEN

SENCO: Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator. A qualified teacher who has responsibility for co-ordinating the SEN provision within a school.



Family of Schools SENCO: A SENCO who co-ordinates SEN provision and processes (e.g. transition planning) across a family of schools. A family of schools usually consists of one secondary school and its primary feeder schools.



Locality SENCO: A SENCO who oversees SEN provision across a locality. (Sheffield has seven localities; each consists of several families of schools which are located in a specific area of the city.) Locality SENCOS provide training and guidance for SENCOS in their area and ensure that approaches like the MyPlan and Sheffield Support Grid are implemented consistently.¹



Teaching Assistant: Also known as Learning Support Assistant. Provides support to the teacher, and may work with pupils with SEN on an individual, small-group or whole-class basis.



Specialist Teacher: A teacher with expertise in working with children with specific needs, such as autism, hearing or visual impairment.



Educational Psychologist: A professional who is legally registered to assess a child's special educational needs and to give advice to schools as to how the child's needs can be met. Educational Psychologists provide independent advice in assessments. Sheffield City Council commissions a team of Educational Psychologists to support the identification and meeting of needs.



SEND 0-25 Team: Part of Sheffield City Council, this team deals with EHC plans and specialist placements.



SEND Manager: A caseworker in the SEND 0-25 Team



SEND = Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

How are Special Educational Needs identified?

Class and subject teachers make regular assessments of progress for all pupils. If a pupil makes LESS THAN EXPECTED PROGRESS (see box), the class or subject teacher, supported by the SENCO, should assess whether the pupil has SEN.

This may involve observation, a range of assessment tools, and/or advice from external professionals. This initial assessment should include a discussion with you and your child. You should be given a short summary of this meeting.

In some cases, parents are the first to notice that their child may have SEN. This could be about something other than their school work. For example, you may be concerned that your child has no friends, that they are increasingly anxious about school, or that they “explode” as soon as they get home. If you are at all worried, make an appointment to see your child's teacher or the SENCO to discuss your concerns.

Once any concerns have been investigated, the school may decide that your child's needs can be met through their pastoral support system or by making some changes to normal classroom teaching, without the need for SEN Support. If that is the case, they should set a clear date for reviewing your child's progress.

If the school decides that your child does have SEN, they must take action to remove any barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place. This is called SEN Support, and you must be notified if your child receives this.

Less than expected progress

Less than expected progress is defined as:

- **Making significantly slower progress than children in the same age group who started from the same baseline**
- **Failing to match or better the child's previous rate of progress**
- **Widening the attainment gap, or failing to close it**

This can include progress in areas other than academic attainment, e.g. social skills.

Slow progress and low attainment do not necessarily mean that a pupil has SEN; nor does attainment in line with chronological age (“hitting averages”) mean that SEN can be ruled out. Progress should always be measured against the child's individual potential.

¹At the time of going to print (March 2017), some localities were adopting slightly different models, such as having several Family of Schools lead SENCOS instead of a Locality SENCO.

SEN Support

If your child has been identified as having SEN, the school should follow a four-part cycle, known as the “graduated approach”.

This means that they will assess your child’s needs, plan the support they need, do the work, and review whether it has made a difference. With each cycle, the school should gain a better understanding of your child’s needs, and refine the provision they put in place.



Assess

The class or subject teacher, working with the SENCO, carries out an analysis of your child’s needs.

If the school feels that it would be helpful to involve an external professional, such as an Educational Psychologist or a Speech and Language Therapist, they must seek your permission first. Afterwards, you should be given a note of what was discussed or agreed with the professional.

If your child is on the waiting list for an assessment, the school should not delay putting support in place; this can always be refined following a diagnosis and/or advice from professionals.

If your child has recently had an assessment or a diagnosis from an NHS service (e.g. the Ryegate Children’s Centre), it is important that you share this information with the SENCO. Parents sometimes think that the school will be notified automatically – this is not the case.



Plan

The school will use the Sheffield Support Grid (see below) to help them make decisions about your child’s package of support.

They should tell you at which level(s) your child has been placed on the grid, and talk you through the package of support they will receive.

You should be given written information about your child’s SEN, the outcomes they are working towards, and the support that is being provided. This could be done via a MyPlan (see right) or other school-based paperwork.

The Sheffield Support Grid

The Sheffield Support Grid is a locally developed tool which is intended to help schools allocate support to children with SEN in a fair, consistent and transparent way.

The grid is split into four categories of need. Within each category, the grid describes five levels of need. Level 1 is for children whose needs can be met with simple adjustments to support which is normally available in school. Level 5 describes the support children with the most complex needs might require. Children can be at more than one level if their needs fall into more than one category of SEN. The SENCO decides which grid level(s) best describe your child.

For each category and level of need, the grid describes a package of provision. Schools are expected to use this as a guide for planning SEN support. The use of the grid is moderated by the Inclusion Taskforce (a group of locality/lead SENCOS, head teachers and relevant professionals) to ensure that it is used consistently by all schools in the city.

You can download the Sheffield Support Grid from:
www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk/resources/education/

The MyPlan

This is a new document used by mainstream schools in Sheffield to record a child’s educational, health and social care needs, the outcomes they are working towards, and the support provided. It looks similar to an EHC plan (see page 10), but is non-statutory, which means it does not confer any legal rights.

Schools are expected to use a MyPlan for all pupils at level 4 of the Sheffield Support Grid (unless they have an EHC plan), and for many pupils at level 3.

Although a one-page profile alongside other school-based paperwork will normally be sufficient for those at levels 1 and 2 of the Sheffield Support Grid, in a small number of cases it may be appropriate to use a MyPlan – for example, where parents would be reassured by having a clear, structured plan in place; or where a range of lower-level provision is delivered by several people or services.

The MyPlan should be reviewed at least three times per year. At least one of these reviews should be a full multi-agency review; this means that external professionals like speech and language therapists should be asked to attend or send a report.

The SENCO should ensure that everyone who works with the pupil understands the MyPlan and implements the provision agreed. You can download the MyPlan template and guidance notes from:
<https://tinyurl.com/l7g6egv>



SEN Support can take many forms, for example:

- Adjustments to the school environment, e.g. creating a quiet base for your child to access when they feel overwhelmed, or installing safety catches on doors
- Changes to the way your child is taught, e.g. small-group work or a special learning programme
- Adjustments to school policies, e.g. exempting your child from homework or from specific subjects or topics, or some specific relaxation of school rules, e.g. school uniforms
- Help with personal care, e.g. dressing, toileting or eating
- Support at break times, e.g. a 'circle of friends', a library pass, or access to a staffed base
- Training, advice and support for school staff who work with your child

The responsibility for the progress of all pupils, including those with SEN, lies with their class or subject teacher. This applies even if a pupil is receiving support from a teaching assistant or external professional outside the classroom.

It is important that all teachers and support staff who work with your child are made aware of your child's needs, the outcomes sought, and the support and teaching strategies that are required. A **One-Page Profile** is an effective way of doing this.

One-Page Profile

A One-Page Profile is a great way of sharing key information about your child with other people, such as teachers, childminders, doctors or support staff. It tells people on a single page of A4 what your child's strengths are, what is important to them, and how they can best be supported.

Schools are expected to use one-page profiles for most pupils with SEN. For those with lower-level needs, this will be a standalone document; for those with higher-level needs, the one-page profile should form part of their MyPlan or EHC plan.

Preparing a one-page profile should be a joint effort, with the pupil, parents and school staff all playing an equal part.

One-page profiles should be kept under review and may need to be updated on a termly basis.

There are lots of templates and examples on the internet; have a look at:

www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk

www.sheffkids.co.uk



The school should meet with you at least three times a year to review your child's progress and decide whether the support provided has been effective. These "SEN review meetings" should be led by the class teacher or form tutor, supported by the SENCO, and should be longer than most parent-teacher meetings. You should be given a written summary of the outcomes, actions and support agreed at these meetings (e.g. via an updated MyPlan).

If your child has not responded to the help they were given, the review should decide what to do next. This may include additional assessments, or more or different help. Sometimes the next step will be to draw up a MyPlan, or to request an **EHC Needs assessment** (see page 11).

What do we mean by "Outcomes"?

An outcome is the improvement that is achieved as a result of an intervention. For example, an outcome of a speech and language therapy programme might be that a child is able to request a range of foods using picture cards.

Outcomes are like stepping stones that move a child or young person closer to achieving their long-term aspirations. For example, if your child's aspiration is to live independently, then their outcomes may focus on developing specific independence skills. A suitable outcome could be that your child is able to catch the bus to school without support.

Outcomes should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound) and sufficiently ambitious.

There's a useful YouTube video about outcomes: www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6rBkVpCnqc

Education Health and Care (EHC) Plans

An EHC plan is a formal legal document which describes a child's educational, health and social care needs and sets out the provision required to meet those needs and achieve agreed long-term outcomes. It is issued by the local authority after an EHC Needs assessment.

Special schools² and Integrated Resources³ normally only admit pupils with EHC plans. However, an EHC plan does not necessarily mean that a child will need a specialist placement; many pupils with EHC Plans are successfully supported in mainstream schools.



EHC plans have replaced Statements of SEN.

If your child still has a Statement, this must be converted into an EHC plan by April 2018. For more information about the conversion process, visit

<https://tinyurl.com/kaur8rl>

To see what an EHC plan looks like, go to:

<https://tinyurl.com/mmsfwf9>

Who can have an EHC plan?

Most children with SEN do not need an EHC plan. EHC plans are for a small minority of children (less than three per cent) who need more support for their special educational needs than a mainstream school can normally provide. This is likely to apply to pupils whose needs are identified at levels 4 or 5 of the Sheffield Support Grid (see

page 7). However, the grid cannot replace the legal test that all local authorities must apply (see next page).

Although EHC plans also cover health and social care, they are education-driven; only children and young people with significant special educational needs can have one. Health and social care needs will only be included if they relate to the pupil's SEN.

Need help?

Families going through the EHCP process can get free information and support through a government-funded service called "Independent Support".

In Sheffield, Independent Support is provided by a company called Core Assets.

You can contact them on **0800 028 8455** or email: **ISreferrals@coreassets.com**

It is likely that Independent Support will not be available after April 2018. However, you will still be able to get help from **SENDIAS** (see page 23).

Requesting an EHC Needs Assessment

An EHC needs assessment is a full investigation of a child or young person's educational, health and social care needs. It is the first step to getting an EHC plan. At the end of the assessment, the local authority must decide whether it will issue an EHC plan or not.

When a request for an EHC needs assessment is received, the local authority must apply a legal test to decide whether

such an assessment is required. They must consider whether a) the child has or may have SEN, and b) whether provision may need to be made for them by way of an EHC plan.

To make this decision, the local authority will look for evidence that the child has made less than expected progress (see page 5), despite the school having done all it can to identify and meet their needs.

There are two main routes for requesting an EHC needs assessment:

1. School requests via the MyPlan process

The local authority expects schools to have completed at least two assess-plan-do-review cycles via the MyPlan before submitting an EHC needs assessment request. However, there is no legal requirement to complete a specific number of MyPlan cycles before carrying out an EHC Needs assessment. In some cases, children may have such significant difficulties that it would be inappropriate to wait for this to happen. In other cases, two cycles of the MyPlan may not be enough to get a clear picture of the child's needs.

To start the process, the SENCO invites the parents and three key professionals - the Locality SENCO, the SEND Manager and a senior Educational Psychologist (see page 4) - to an 'Agree to Assess meeting'.⁴

Before the meeting, the SENCO sends your child's MyPlan to the SEND 0-25

Team. Receipt in the team marks the start of the statutory process, which must be completed within 20 weeks (see page 16).

At the Agree to Assess meeting, the key professionals look at the evidence and listen to everyone's views. They then decide on the local authority's behalf whether or not it is necessary to carry out an EHC needs assessment.

- If the answer is **yes**, the assessment can begin straight away.
- If the answer is **no**, the review meeting group will look at the MyPlan and decide, with your involvement, how it can be changed to better meet your child's needs.

In either case, the local authority must inform you about their decision in writing within six weeks of the assessment request. If they decide not to carry out an assessment, you have a right of appeal.

² A school that makes specialist provision for pupils with SEND.

³ A specialist unit within a mainstream school to support children with specific needs.

⁴ At the time of going to print (March 2017), three localities had not yet implemented Agree to Assess meetings and their cases were still being heard by a central panel. However, there is an expectation that all localities will eventually operate as described above.

2. Parental requests

Parents have the right to request an EHC needs assessment at any time. You can do this by sending a letter to: SEND 0-25 Team, North Wing, Level 5, Moorfoot Building, Sheffield S1 4PL, or by emailing ed-sensupportteam@sheffield.gov.uk. The more information you provide with your request, the better. Contact a Family have developed a useful prompt sheet: <https://tinyurl.com/zdg5xdm>. If you want, you can use the Parental Advice Form, which parents are asked to complete if the assessment goes ahead (<https://tinyurl.com/mmsfwf9>). This would save you having to repeat the information later on.

Once your request has been received, the local authority will ask the school to provide information about your child. The school should do this by either sending in your child's MyPlan, or if none is in place, by using the MyPlan template to collate this information. The local authority will also ask any professionals who are involved with your child to send in relevant information which will help them to make a decision about your request. The local authority must write to you within six weeks to tell you whether they are going to assess your child.

Carrying out the Assessment

Once the local authority has decided to carry out an assessment, they will start gathering information about your child. This does NOT mean that your child will definitely get an EHC plan.

The local authority must seek advice and information from a number of people, including the parents, the school, an educational psychologist, health and social care services, and any relevant professionals

involved with your child. In many cases, this information will already be available through the MyPlan. If it isn't, updated advice will be requested. Advice and information requested by the local authority must be provided within six weeks of the request.

The local authority requires parents' consent to collect information about their child's needs from other professionals. It is important that you complete and return the consent form as soon as possible.

TIPS:



You can ask the local authority to seek information from professionals not currently involved with your child, if you think that would be useful.



Ask the professionals to send you their draft reports before they submit them to the local authority, and check that they contain detailed information about your child's needs, the support or provision they require, and the expected outcomes.



It is helpful to have any provision quantified in these reports (if appropriate), as this will be required if an EHC plan is written.



You can send in other reports if you have them, for example a report from an independent speech and language therapist.

The EHCP Assessment Meeting

Once all the information and advice has been gathered, you and the professionals who are involved with your child will be invited to an EHCP Assessment Meeting.

(In some cases, the people present at the Agree to Assess meeting may decide that the information available is sufficient for the assessment. In that case, and as long as you agree, the Agree to Assess meeting turns into the EHCP Assessment Meeting.)

At the EHCP Assessment Meeting, the local authority decides whether or not to issue an EHC plan by considering the assessment reports and discussing this with all those present at the meeting.

The decision will be **yes** if the evidence shows that your child needs more support for their special educational needs than a mainstream school can normally provide without access to extra funding or resources. The meeting will then start drafting the EHC plan. This includes agreeing the outcomes your child or young person will be working towards and the support they need to help them achieve these. You will also be asked if you would like a **Personal Budget** (see page 15).

The decision will be **no** if the local authority decides that your child's needs can be met from the resources normally available to the school. The people in the meeting will then look at the MyPlan and decide how it can be changed to better meet your child's needs. The local authority must inform you about their decision in writing. You will have the right to appeal, and the local authority must tell you how to do this.

The Draft Plan

The local authority will send you a draft plan and invite you to comment on it. You have 15 days to request changes; if you need more time, you can ask for an extension. You can also ask for a meeting with the SEND Manager. At this point, the local authority can only make changes requested by you; if they want to change anything else, they must issue a new draft plan.

You will also be asked which school you want your child to attend. The local authority can only refuse your choice of school if specific exceptions apply (see <https://tinyurl.com/zvwch72>). The local authority must consult the school before naming it in the EHC plan, and the school then has 15 days to respond. Once named in the final EHC plan, that school **must** admit your child.

EHC plan checklist

- ✓ Is the plan clear, concise and easy to read?
- ✓ Does it include your and your child's views?
- ✓ Are your child's special educational, health and social care needs clearly detailed?
- ✓ Are the outcomes SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound), linked to the aspirations, and broken down into smaller steps?
- ✓ Is the description of education, health and social care provision detailed, specific and quantified? The EHC plan should clearly state who will do what, how often, for how long, and for what purpose.
- ✓ Is the provision relevant to the outcomes?
- ✓ Is there provision for each special educational need?

More Information

IPSEA (Independent Parental Special Education Advice) have published a useful checklist which helps you check the plan section by section; you can download it from <https://tinyurl.com/klpac4j>

The Council for Disabled Children have published a selection of good practice examples from real EHC plans; download it from <https://tinyurl.com/n3c7t7u>

The Final Plan

The local authority must issue a final EHC plan within 20 weeks of the initial assessment request. There should be no surprises when you receive the final plan – changes should only have been made if you requested them at the draft stage.

Once an EHC plan has been issued, the local authority must secure the special educational provision specified in the plan, and the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group must arrange the health provision. If you are not happy with the content of the EHC plan, you have two months to appeal to the SEND tribunal.



What is a Personal Budget?

A personal budget is an amount of money identified by the local authority to deliver some or all of the provision set out in an EHC plan,

where the parent or young person is involved in securing that provision. Its purpose is to give families more control over the services and support they receive.

A personal budget can be provided as a notional budget held by the local authority or school,



as a direct payment (cash payment) made to the family, or a combination of the two.

Personal budgets and direct payments are optional for families. However, the local authority must prepare a personal budget if asked to do so when a draft EHC plan is being prepared, or at the annual review of an existing plan.

For more information, please see Sheffield's Local Offer (www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk).

Annual reviews

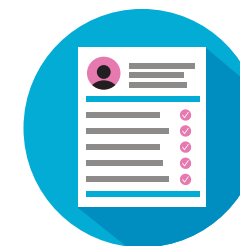
An EHC plan must be reviewed at least annually. Most of the review process is handled by the SENCO, who arranges the review meeting and invites all relevant professionals to attend or send reports. You and (if appropriate) your child should also be invited and offered the opportunity to submit your views in writing. Any reports must be circulated at least two weeks before the meeting.

The review will consider your child's progress over the past year and whether any changes need to be made to their EHC plan.

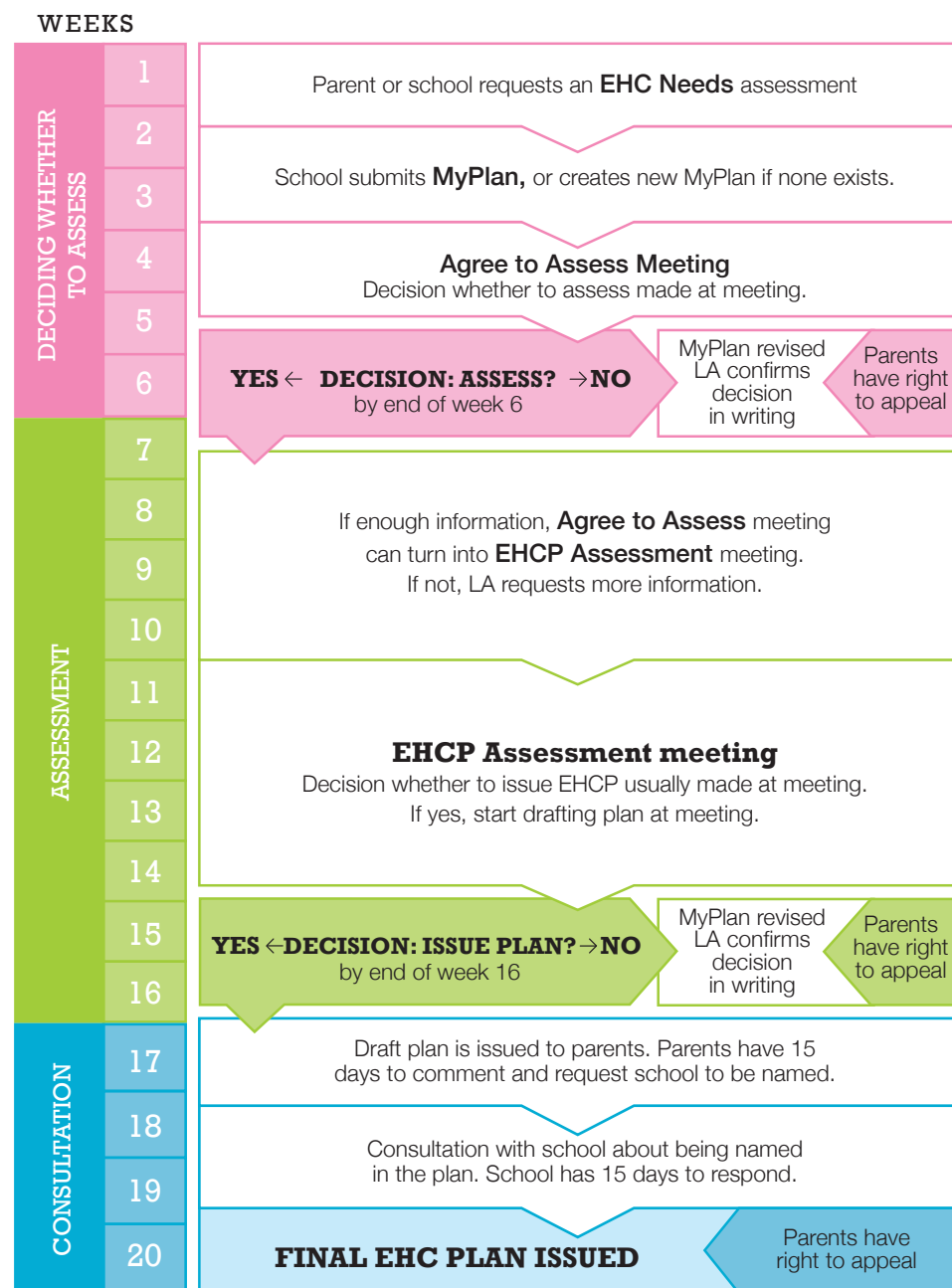
Within two weeks of the review meeting, the school sends everyone a report of the meeting. This should set out any recommended changes to the EHC plan.

Within four weeks of the review meeting, the local authority must inform you in writing whether it is going to amend the plan, leave it unchanged, or cease it. If the local authority has decided to amend the plan, it must send you a draft plan and invite you to comment on it.

You have a right of appeal if you are not happy with the outcome of the review.



EHC Needs Assessment - timescales



This diagram shows the MAXIMUM timescales set out in the legislation. Assessments may be completed in less time.

SEN Funding

Mainstream schools (including academies) receive SEN funding as part of their normal budget allocation. This is sometimes referred to as a school's 'notional SEN budget'. The amount of SEN funding for each school is calculated using a complex formula which is based on indicators like economic deprivation and previous attainment. It is NOT based on the actual needs of the actual pupils on roll.

Schools are expected to use this funding to make special educational provision for their pupils, up to a nationally prescribed threshold (currently £6,000 per pupil per year). This is the maximum per-pupil amount a school would be expected to spend from its notional SEN budget; most pupils with SEN require less. There are also many interventions and approaches which cost nothing, but can still make a big difference.

The local authority also delegates 'top-up' or 'High Needs' funding for SEN to Sheffield's seven localities (A-G). Each locality comprises several secondary schools and their primary feeder schools. The amount of top-up

funding each locality receives is based on the proportion of pupils identified at levels 3, 4 and 5 on the **Sheffield Support Grid** in that locality (see page 7).

The schools in each locality agree together how this funding should be used. They might decide to buy services together (e.g. to employ a specialist to work across all schools in the locality), or they might divide it up between schools. For more information about the different locality models, please see <https://tinyurl.com/mkkne66>

Individual schools should consider their strategic approach to meeting SEN in the context of the total resources they have available. This approach must be set out in the school's published SEN policy and should enable parents to understand what they can normally expect the school to provide for pupils with SEN.

Schools do NOT automatically get top-up funding for individual pupils with EHC plans or MyPlans, or for pupils identified at specific levels of the Sheffield Support Grid. The legal duty to ensure that the special educational provision described in a child's EHC plan is delivered rests with the local authority.

More information

There are three key sources of information for parents:

Your school's SEN Information Report:

The SEN policy describes the systems and processes used by the school to identify and meet the needs of pupils with SEN. The SEN Information Report is an annual account of how the school has implemented its SEN policy. It must be published on the school's website.

The Local Offer: Every local authority must publish a website with information about the support and services available to children and young people with SEND aged 0-25 years in their area. This includes information about childcare, sport and leisure activities, education, health and social care services,

and more. Sheffield's local offer can be accessed at www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk. If you don't have an internet connection, you can access the information in the local offer by calling Customer Services on **0114 273 4567** or SENDIAS on **0114 273 6009**.

The SEND Code of Practice: This is government guidance which tells local authorities, schools and other organisations how to interpret the law in relation to children and young people with SEND. All schools must consider this guidance and should normally follow it, unless there is a very good reason not to. Information about SEN Support can be found in chapter 6, and information about EHC plans in chapter 9. You can download the Code from: <https://tinyurl.com/omv3tpc>

Who can help my child with...



...issues around mental health or emotional wellbeing?

MAST (Multi-Agency Support Teams) provide early intervention for low-level mental health problems. They accept referrals from parents, schools and professionals. There are three teams: East (**0114 2053635**), North (**0114 2331189**) and West (**0114 2506865**). You may also want to discuss your concerns with your GP.

CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) treats children and young people with significant mental health difficulties that do not respond to first-line treatments. They accept referrals from GPs, educational psychologists, qualified social workers, paediatricians, and MAST panel meetings.

For a full list of mental health and emotional wellbeing services for children and young people in Sheffield, download the Let's Talk directory: www.sheffieldccg.nhs.uk/Your-Health/lets-talk-directory.htm

...problems with behaviour?

MAST (Multi-Agency Support Teams) offer parenting courses and general advice on managing children's behaviour. They accept referrals from parents, schools and professionals. There are three teams: East (**0114 2053635**), North (**0114 2331189**) and West (**0114 2506865**).

If your child has ADHD and is under the care of the Ryegate Children's Centre, you can contact the ADHD Nurse on **0114 2717640** for advice.

...autism and social communication difficulties?

The Autism Team supports mainstream schools to meet the needs of pupils with autism and related conditions. If you have consented to the team being involved with your child, they will contact you at key times, such as when your child changes school, to make sure good plans are in place. A helpline for parents is available on **0114 273 6567** (Mon-Thu, 1-4pm). You should ring the helpline or ask your SENCO to contact the team if you think their support is needed.

The Autism Team is best placed to provide support in relation to education. For other issues, and if your child is under the care of the Ryegate Children's Centre, you can also contact the Autism Nurse on **0114 3053138** for advice.

...problems with speech, language or communication?

The Speech and Language Therapy Service works with children aged 0-16 years with speech, language, communication, or swallowing difficulties. Referrals normally come from GPs and schools, but referrals from parents are also accepted. You can contact the Speech and Language Therapy office on **0114 226 2333**.

...difficulties with reading, writing or dyslexia?

Schools can purchase initial assessments of pupils with SEND difficulties as well as training for school staff around SEND

from Fusion TSA (S2S Service, formally the Learning Support Service). The S2S teachers are trained to carry out assessments on students with SEND, but are not qualified to give a formal diagnosis of dyslexia.

The **Educational Psychology Service** only carries out assessments in very complex cases and if this has been agreed by the locality or the local authority. They do not generally become involved if a child's reading, writing or other specific learning difficulty is the main concern, because schools should be able to provide appropriate interventions. If a pupil is not responding to these interventions, staff and parents can get advice from an Educational Psychologist at drop-in consultations which are offered to all schools. The Educational Psychology Service also offers training on literacy interventions.

There are several private organisations which offer dyslexia assessments, and you can look them up on the Local Offer website (www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk). You will need to weigh up the cost of a private assessment against the likely benefits of having a diagnosis. A diagnostic label should not be needed to access appropriate support in school, and it won't automatically give a pupil more time or extra help in exams (see page 22).

...medical needs?

The School Nursing Service can help with any health concerns about your child and advise schools on supporting children with additional health needs. Parents can contact the service directly on **0114 3053225**.

...problems with vision or hearing?

The Service for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Children (tel. 0114 273 6410) works with deaf and hearing-impaired children and their families. The Vision Support Service (tel. **0114 294 1201**) supports children with a visual impairment and their families. Anyone can make a referral, but only children who have been diagnosed by a health professional as having a hearing or vision impairment can access the service.

...problems with gross or fine motor skills?

The Occupational Therapy Service works with children who have difficulties with the practical skills necessary for their everyday life, such as playing, dressing, toileting, pencil skills, balance or sensory issues. **The Physiotherapy Service** works with children who have problems with gross motor skills and mobility. Both services accept referrals from GPs, consultants and other health professionals.

...other concerns about learning or development?

The Educational Psychology Service works with families and staff in educational settings to support the education and development of children and young people. The service will answer general enquiries from parents (tel. **0114 250 6800**). You should ask your school's SENCO to contact the service if you think an Educational Psychologist needs to be involved.

If you feel that your child may need to be assessed for a neurodevelopmental disorder such as autism or ADHD, you should speak to your GP.

For more information about support and services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, please visit the Local Offer: www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk

Troubleshooting



“My child is getting increasingly anxious about school and often refuses to attend.”

Raise this issue with your child’s school as soon as possible and ask them for support. You should also ask your GP for help. The school should work closely with you and any relevant support services (e.g. Autism Team, Educational Psychology, MAST, CAMHS) to understand what causes your child’s anxiety and what needs to be done to reduce it. This should be recorded in a written document (e.g. a MyPlan) with clear review dates. For more information, please see <https://tinyurl.com/n2yj7yq>

“I think my child should be assessed by a specialist, but the school disagrees.”

The SEND Code of Practice states that a school should always involve a specialist if, despite the provision of appropriate support, a pupil makes little or no progress or continues to work substantially below the levels expected for their age.

It may be useful to discuss with the school what the outcome of an assessment might be. Would it have an impact on daily

classroom practice, or enable your child to access support they are not currently getting?

It may also be useful for you to talk directly to the relevant service. Whilst services like Educational Psychology and the Autism Team only accept requests for involvement from schools, they are happy to take calls from parents. The Educational Psychology Service now offers drop-in consultations to all schools which can involve parents. You might ask your SENCO about using one of these to discuss your child’s needs. See page 19 for contact details.

If you think that your child needs to be referred to an NHS service (e.g. Speech and Language Therapy, Physiotherapy, CAMHS, diagnostic assessment for conditions like autism or ADHD), you should ask your GP for a referral. The GP may request information from your child’s school.

“I think my child needs a MyPlan, but the school disagrees - what can I do now?”

Make an appointment with the SENCO to discuss your concerns, and ask where they see your child on the Sheffield Support Grid (see page 7). The local authority expects to see a MyPlan in place for many children at level 3, and for all children at level 4 unless they have an EHC plan. However, the school should follow a person-centred approach, tailored to individual needs and circumstances. In a small number of cases, this could mean using a MyPlan even for pupils at levels 1 or 2 if it was felt that this would provide parents with reassurance that their child’s needs are being met. Regardless of whether or not your child has a MyPlan, the school must inform you if your child is getting SEN Support, and they should hold at least three SEN review meetings per year to discuss with you how your child is progressing, whether the support is working and any concerns you may have.

It may help to explain **why** you think a MyPlan is needed – are you worried that your child’s progress has stalled? Have you noticed something about your child that the school may not be aware of, e.g. increased anxiety or challenging behaviour at home? Do you need more information about what the school is doing to support your child? There may be other ways of achieving the outcome you want, e.g. a home-school diary to improve communication between you and the school.

“What should I do if I disagree with the level on the Sheffield Support Grid or the package of support that my child has been allocated?”

Discuss your concerns with the SENCO in the first instance. It is reasonable to ask if the decisions have been checked out with other local schools. If the disagreement cannot be resolved, the case should be referred to the Locality SENCO, who may seek the views of the locality’s Educational Psychologist (see page 4).

“My child’s school says my child can only attend in the mornings because they don’t have enough funding to support him full time.”

Part-time timetables should only be used as a temporary measure in exceptional circumstances to meet the pupil’s (not the school’s) needs. There should be an action plan with timescales for supporting your child back into full-time education.

Putting your child on a part-time timetable may indicate that your school is not doing all it can to support them, or that the school do not know what else they can try. It may mean they have exhausted all the available options and resources and need help to continue to meet your child’s needs. If there is no progress back to full-time attendance, it may be advisable to request an EHC plan (see page 10). This will ensure that these

issues are highlighted and addressed.

If your child already has an EHC plan, you should contact your SEND Manager in the 0-25 SEND Team and advise them that the provision described in the plan is not being delivered. It may be necessary to arrange an early review of the EHC plan.

“My child has medical needs. Can I expect the school to provide medical support?”

Schools have a legal duty to support pupils with medical conditions, so that they receive a full education and have access to the same opportunities at school as any other child. The government has published statutory guidance entitled ‘Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions’ (see <https://tinyurl.com/nrv8wxy>) which sets out what schools are expected to do. The guidance also includes a list of “unacceptable practice”, such as asking parents to come into school to administer prescribed medicines to their child.

“School keeps asking me to come in and change my child after a toileting accident.”

It is bad practice to ask you to come in to change your child, and completely unacceptable to force your child to sit in wet or soiled underwear until you arrive. You may wish to make a formal complaint to the school. Schools sometimes believe that two members of staff need to be present when changing a child, but this is incorrect – one person is enough, as long as another member of staff is nearby. You should ask for a meeting with the SENCO and the school nurse to discuss this issue. It may be appropriate to arrange a referral to the Community Continence Service. For more information about supporting children with continence issues, visit www.eric.org.uk

“My child’s disability means he’s disadvantaged in exams. Can he get extra help?”

Adjustments to exams, such as extra time, a laptop, a reader or a scribe, are called “access arrangements”. Pupils don’t need to have an EHC plan, be on SEN Support or even have a diagnosis to qualify. It is the identification and impact of any difficulty, not the application of a label that makes them eligible. Their issues, however, must be considered “disabling”.

Access arrangements will normally only be agreed if they are part of your child’s normal way of working – e.g. your child will only be allowed to use a laptop in exams if they usually have one in class. Depending on the exam and the type of access arrangements your child needs, the school may need to carry out an assessment and/or submit an application to an external body several months before the exam takes place – so don’t wait until their GCSEs are just around the corner! For more information, go to: <https://tinyurl.com/m3ea87f>

“My child’s MyPlan looks great on paper, but some of the provision it sets out isn’t being made.”

Discuss your concerns with the SENCO in the first instance. If that doesn’t resolve the issue, you should ask the school to arrange a review of the MyPlan and invite the Locality SENCO to this review.

“I think my child needs one-to-one support from a TA, but I’ve been told that you need an EHC plan to get this.”

This is incorrect. An EHC plan would only be required if your child needed more support than a mainstream school can normally provide.

Decisions about your child’s support should be made with you through the assess-plan-do-review cycle (see pages 6 - 9). One-to-one support is part of a range of

interventions that the school can use, but it is unlikely to be the first option.

In general, it is assumed that schools will employ TAs from their notional SEN budget (see page 17). The support offered by TAs can be enhanced using top-up funding from the locality. Some localities have decided that top-up funding for one-to-one support will not normally be given, because they believe that upskilling staff, developing interventions or funding equipment is a better way to use this funding. However, there are exceptions to this policy, e.g. when a pupil with very high levels of need has just arrived in Sheffield, or if one-to-one support is specified in an EHC plan. For more information about locality structures and policies, please see <https://tinyurl.com/mkkne66>

Research has shown that schools often use TAs in ways that do not help pupils with SEN make progress. This is particularly the case where TAs are used in such a way that teachers have little or no interaction with an individual child. It is important that careful consideration is given to whether the use of TA support will bring the most benefit to your child. The use of TAs should reflect best practice, and TAs should be well trained, supported and supervised to ensure this is the case. You can find more information in the booklet “Making the best use of Teaching Assistants” published by the Education Endowment Foundation (<https://tinyurl.com/levrpqv>).

“How do I choose a school for my child?”

Having SEN does not give your child priority in the admissions process, so the usual criteria (catchment area, older siblings at the school, etc.) apply. The only exception are children with EHC plans – if the local authority has named a specific school in the plan, then that school must admit the child.

You can find information about the SEN provision offered by each of Sheffield’s schools (including special schools and Integrated Resources) on the Local Offer website (www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk). It’s useful to attend schools’ open evenings, but even better to see the school in action during the day. You may want to make an appointment with the SENCO of the school you are considering. Write down a list of questions to ask, and take along your child’s MyPlan or EHC plan, if they have one. Talking to parents who currently have children with SEN at the school can also be helpful – but bear in mind different children can have very different experiences of the same school.

“My child has had several fixed-term exclusions. I’m worried that she will be excluded permanently.”

Schools should not apply their behaviour policy rigidly to ALL pupils. Excluding a disabled pupil for behaviour which arises as a consequence of his or her disability may amount to disability discrimination.

If a school has concerns about the behaviour, or risk of exclusion, of a child with SEN, then it should consider what additional support or alternative placement may be required. This could mean holding an emergency review of the child’s MyPlan or EHC plan; involving external agencies/specialists; educating the pupil “off-site”; or arranging a “managed move” to another school. For more information, see <http://tinyurl.com/lnytu9u>

“I’m starting to get really worried about my child’s transition to post-16 education, and to adult services. There seem to be so many changes about things like benefits and decision making. Where can I find out more?”

We have published a booklet about transition that guides you through the whole process step by step, starting in Year 9. You can download it from <https://tinyurl.com/lgrclwc> or call us on 0300 321 4721 to request a hardcopy.

Need more help?

Contact SENDIAS...

SENDIAS (Special Educational Needs Information Advice and Support – formerly known as Parent Partnership) is part of Sheffield City Council and provides free and impartial information, advice and support to children and young people with SEND (aged 0-25) and their parents. They can support you in discussions with your child’s school to ensure the right SEN Support is in place; advise and support you on matters relating to EHC plans; and help you resolve disagreements and lodge formal appeals.

Tel. 0114 273 6009

Email: ed-parent.partnership@sheffield.gov.uk



Get in touch

Email:

enquiries@sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

Call:

0300 321 4721

Website:

www.sheffieldparentcarerforum.org.uk

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