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Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

1. Overview

Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can affect a child or young person's ability to learn. They can affect their:

- behaviour or ability to socialise, for example they struggle to make friends
- reading and writing, for example because they have dyslexia
- ability to understand things
- concentration levels, for example because they have ADHD
- physical ability

Who to talk to

If you think your child may have special educational needs, contact the SEN co-ordinator, or 'SENCO' in your child's school or nursery.

[Contact your local council](#) if your child is not in a school or nursery.

Your local [Information, Advice and Support \(IAS\) Service](#) can give you advice about SEND.

Support your child can receive

Your child may be eligible for:

- [SEN support](#) - support given in school, like speech therapy
- an [education, health and care \(EHC\) plan](#) - a plan of care for children and young people aged up to 25 who have more complex needs

If you or your child got [support before September 2014](#) this will continue until your local council changes it to an EHC plan.

2. Special educational needs support

Your child will get SEN support at their school or college.

Your child may need an [education, health and care \(EHC\) plan](#) if they need more support than their school provides.

Children under 5

SEN support for children under 5 includes:

- a written progress check when your child is 2 years old
- a child health visitor carrying out a health check for your child if they're aged 2 to 3
- a written assessment in the summer term of your child's first year of primary school
- making reasonable adjustments for disabled children, like providing aids like tactile signs

Nurseries, playgroups and childminders registered with Ofsted follow the [Early Years Foundation Stage](#) (EYFS) framework. The framework makes sure that there's support in place for children with SEND.

Talk to a doctor or health adviser if you think your child has SEND but they do not go to a nursery, playgroup or childminder. They'll tell you what support options are available.

Children between 5 and 15

Talk to the teacher or the SEN co-ordinator (SENCO) if you think your child needs:

- a special learning programme
- extra help from a teacher or assistant
- to work in a smaller group
- observation in class or at break
- help taking part in class activities
- extra encouragement in their learning, for example to ask questions or to try something they find difficult
- help communicating with other children
- support with physical or personal care difficulties, for example eating, getting around school safely or using the toilet

Young people aged 16 or over in further education

Contact the college before your child starts further education to make sure that they can meet your child's needs.

The college and your local authority will talk to your child about the support they need.

3. Extra help

An education, health and care (EHC) plan is for children and young people aged up to 25 who need more support than is available through special educational needs support.

EHC plans identify educational, health and social needs and set out the additional support to meet those needs.

Requesting an EHC assessment

You can ask [your local authority](#) to carry out an assessment if you think your child needs an EHC plan.

A young person can request an assessment themselves if they're aged 16 to 25.

A request can also be made by anyone else who thinks an assessment may be necessary, including doctors, health visitors, teachers, parents and family friends.

If they decide to carry out an assessment you may be asked for:

- any reports from your child's school, nursery or childminder
- doctors' assessments of your child
- a letter from you about your child's needs

The local authority will tell you within 16 weeks whether an EHC plan is going to be made for your child.

Creating an EHC plan

- 1 Your local authority will create a draft EHC plan and send you a copy.
- 2 You have 15 days to comment, including if you want to ask that your child goes to a specialist needs school or specialist college.
- 3 Your local authority has 20 weeks from the date they receive the request for the assessment to give you the final EHC plan.

Disagreeing with a decision

You can challenge your local authority about:

- their decision to not carry out an assessment
- their decision to not create an EHC plan
- the special educational support in the EHC plan
- the school named in the EHC plan

If you cannot resolve the problem with your local authority, you can [appeal to the Special Educational Needs and Disability \(SEND\) Tribunal](#).

Personal budgets

You may be able to get a personal budget for your child if they have an EHC plan or have been told that they need one.

It allows you to have a say in how to spend the money on support for your child.

There are 3 ways you can use your personal budget. You can have:

- direct payments made into your account - you buy and manage services yourself
- an arrangement with your local authority or school where they hold the money for you but you still decide how to spend it (sometimes called 'notional arrangements')
- third-party arrangements - you choose someone else to manage the money for you

You can have a combination of all 3 options.

Independent support for children of all ages

Independent supporters can help you and your child through the new SEN assessment process, including:

- replacing a statement of special educational needs with a new EHC plan
- moving a child from a learning difficulty assessment (LDA) to an EHC plan

You can find out how to get local support through:

- [Council for Disabled Children](#)
- [Information, Advice and Support Service Network](#)
- your [local authority website](#) and search for 'Local Offer'

4. If your child got support before September 2014

Your child will move to an [education, health and care \(EHC\)](#) plan. This will normally happen at a planned review, or when your child moves school. Your council will tell you which.

Your child will already be getting SEN support if they used to get help through:

- School Action or School Action Plus
- Early Years Action or Early Years Action Plus

Support after your child leaves school

If your child has a statement of special educational needs, they'll have a 'transition plan' drawn up in Year 9. This helps to plan for their future after they leave school.

They'll continue to get support during further education. Your child can also ask for an EHC assessment if they need more help than the school or college can provide.

Help and advice

You can call the Contact a Family helpline for help and advice.

Contact a Family helpline

helpline@cafamily.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 808 3555

Monday to Friday, 9:30am to 5pm

[Find out about call charges](#)

You can also get help from [Independent Parental Special Education Advice \(IPSEA\)](#).

IPSEA advice line

Telephone: 0800 018 4016

Monday to Thursday, 10am to 4pm and 7pm to 9pm

Friday, 1pm to 4pm

[Find out about call charges](#)

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