

## SEND AND SCHOOL · GUIDE 2

# What is an EHCP?



### SHORT ANSWER

An Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is a **legally binding document** for a child or young person aged 0–25 whose special educational needs go beyond what a nursery, school or college can provide from its own budget and staff. It sets out their needs and the exact support they must receive.

#### Who can have one?

Children (0–16), young people (16–19) and young adults (19–25) with special educational needs who need more support than their setting can give at SEN support level. Related health and social care needs can be included — but a plan cannot be issued for health or social care reasons alone.

#### How do you request one?

Many people do not realise that **you can ask the council yourself** — you do not have to go through the school. Check your council's website for the application form. Your child's school can also support you, and may complete the application with you.

## The process and timescales

- 1 Request an assessment.** You, the school or another professional asks the council for an EHC needs assessment.
- 2 Decision to assess.** The council must decide within **6 weeks** whether to carry out the assessment, and must keep you informed.
- 3 Advice is gathered** from the school, an educational psychologist, speech and language therapists, social care and others. Everyone asked must reply **within 6 weeks**. Your views, wishes and feelings — and your child's — must be included.
- 4 Decision on a plan.** The council must tell you whether it will issue a plan within **16 weeks** of the request.
- 5 Draft plan.** You receive a draft to review and comment on. The school section is left blank at this stage so you can say which school you prefer.
- 6 Final plan.** The final EHCP must be issued within **20 weeks** of the original request, and it is reviewed every year.

#### If the council refuses, or the plan is not right

You can appeal to the **SEND Tribunal**. Legal aid may be available depending on your income. Free, independent help is available from your local **SENDIAS** service, from **IPSEA** (legally based advice and tribunal support) and from The Traveller Movement. The support in a final EHCP is legally enforceable.

## What is in an EHCP? Sections A to K

The layout of plans varies between councils, but every EHCP must contain the same labelled sections:

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Section A</b> | The views, interests and aspirations of the child and their parents, or of the young person.                                                                                                       |
| <b>Section B</b> | The child or young person's special educational needs (SEN) — covering cognition and learning, communication and interaction, social, emotional and mental health, and sensory and physical needs. |
| <b>Section C</b> | Health needs related to their SEN, such as physical or mental health difficulties, eating issues, anxiety or epilepsy.                                                                             |
| <b>Section D</b> | Social care needs related to their SEN or disability.                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Section E</b> | The outcomes the support should achieve for the child or young person.                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Section F</b> | The special educational provision (support) required. This must be <b>specific, detailed and quantified</b> , and the council — not the school — must make sure it is delivered.                   |
| <b>Section G</b> | Health provision reasonably required, such as equipment or medication.                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Section H</b> | Social care provision, such as short breaks or support at home.                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Section I</b> | The name and type of school or setting. Blank in the draft; once named, that setting must admit your child.                                                                                        |
| <b>Section J</b> | Details of any direct payments (personal budget).                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Section K</b> | Copies of all the advice and information gathered during the assessment, including reports from parents.                                                                                           |

### What is changing? SEND reform 2026

In February 2026 the government published plans to reform the SEND system in England (the schools white paper *Every Child Achieving and Thriving*). EHCPs will be kept for children with the most complex needs, and every child with SEND will have a school-led Individual Support Plan. **Your current rights do not change**: existing EHCPs stay in place, and no changes to current support will happen before September 2030 at the earliest. Read more at [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) ("SEND reform: putting children and young people first").

### Need advice?

Call The Traveller Movement on **020 7607 2002** or email us at [info@travellermovement.org.uk](mailto:info@travellermovement.org.uk)