



A Guide for Families: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in the UK

Table of Contents

(1) Introduction

- What are Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)?
- Our focus

(2) Your Child's Rights

- The right to an appropriate education
- Support with or without a diagnosis
- Reasonable adjustments
- The right to an EHCP
- The right to participate

(3) How to Find Support for Your Child

- Support through your school
- Support through your General Practitioner (GP)
- Specialist hospitals such as Evelina London
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Practical advice

(4) Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

- EHC needs assessment
- Who can request it, and how is it done?
- What happens during the assessment?
- What does the EHCP include? (Sections A to K)
- Review of the draft EHCP
- Finalisation and annual review of the EHCP
- How to lodge an appeal
- SEND tribunal and mediation

Table of Contents

(5) Schools and Educational Options

- Mainstream schools
- Resource-based schools
- Specialist schools
- How to choose a school

(6) How to Change Schools

- How to change schools with or without an EHCP

(7) Practical Support for Everyday Life

- Free school transport
- Access to therapies
- Financial assistance
- Home adaptations
- Support outside of school hours

(8) Mental Health, Wellbeing, and Support Networks

- Your child's mental health
- Carer wellbeing
- Community support networks

(9) Glossary and Resources

- Key terms related to SEND



Versions of this guide in different languages

- This guide is also available in Spanish and Portuguese. You can find both versions on our website:

<https://irmo.org.uk/>

Introduction

If you are a parent or carer of a child with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), this guide is for you.

We know that navigating the UK education system can be overwhelming. The purpose of this guide is to support you, provide useful information and help you defend your child's rights.

What are Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)?

A special educational need refers to when a child or young person has learning difficulties or a disability that makes it difficult for them to learn like other children of their age.

These needs can affect different areas of development, such as:

- The way they learn and process information
- Their communication or way of relating to other people
- Their behaviour or emotional well-being
- Their physical or sensory skills

A child or young person with SEND may need different or additional support to that normally provided at school in order to learn and develop to their full potential.



* Our Focus

We developed this guide in collaboration with *Familias Neurodiversas*, a network of Latin American families in the United Kingdom with direct experience of the special educational needs system. Our aim was to create a resource that reflects the real questions, concerns and experiences of migrant families navigating this system. We hope this guide serves as a practical and accessible tool, and we invite you to contact us if there is any information you would like us to include in future versions: this is a living document that we will continue to update in collaboration with the community.

Your child's rights

As a parent or carer, it is important to know that your child has rights. These rights are protected by UK law and international treaties. No school or authority can deny them because of your immigration status, the language you speak or your lack of knowledge of the system.

Some important laws that protect the rights to education and inclusion are:



- **Children and Families Act 2014**
- **Equality Act 2010**
- **Human Rights Act 1998**

These laws state that no child should be discriminated against because of their disability, background, or for any other reason.

(1) The right to an appropriate education

Your child has the right to an education that is tailored to their needs. This means that they should receive the support they need to learn, participate, and progress at school, just like any other child.

(2) Support with or without a diagnosis

Your child has the right to receive support even if they do not have a formal diagnosis. If they are experiencing difficulties with learning, behaviour, communication, or any other area, the school must take action. This is called SEN Support (Support for Special Educational Needs).

Your child's rights

(3) Reasonable adjustments

Schools are required by law to make adjustments so that children with SEND can learn without disadvantages.

This may include extra time in exams, adapted materials, additional support or changes to the way teaching is delivered.

(4) Right to an EHCP

If your child has more complex needs, they are entitled to have their case assessed by the Local Education Authority to decide whether they need an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).



Also known as the education team within your council (e.g., in Lambeth, Lewisham, Camden, etc.).

This is a legal document that obliges the school and the local authority to provide specific support, without which your child would not be able to enjoy the same level of education as their peers.

(5) Right to participate

Your child has the right to be heard. Their opinion must be taken into account in all decisions that affect them.

You, as a parent or carer, also have the right to participate in the whole process and to be taken seriously.

How to find support for your child

Support through your school

All schools in England have a duty to identify and support pupils with potential special educational needs (SEN). It is important to raise your concerns early on.

Who should you talk to first?

- Start by talking to your child's class teacher or their Head of Year, who's familiar with your child's day-to-day.
- If the difficulties continue, ask for a meeting with the SENCo (Special Educational Needs Coordinator), the person responsible for coordinating support for pupils with SEN.
- You may wish to bring notes with examples of your concerns (for example, if you notice that your child has problems reading, concentrating or communicating).

Why is it important to talk to your school?

- Communicating your concerns allows the school to identify needs early and begin offering support before challenges further affect your child's learning or self-esteem.

What support can the school offer?

- The school should follow a process called the “Assess–Plan–Do–Review” cycle to review and adjust support based on your child's progress.
- Support may include:
 - Specific interventions, such as extra help with reading, speech or maths.
 - Support within the classroom, with adaptations to materials or a support assistant.
 - Personalised plans, known as SEN Support or Individual Support Plans (ISPs), with clear goals and regular reviews.
 - Referral to external services (e.g., educational psychology, speech therapy, CAMHS), if necessary.



If you do not feel comfortable speaking English, you can request an interpreter for meetings with the school. You can also ask for all important information to be confirmed in writing or by email, so that you can review or translate it in your own time.

How to monitor your child's progress

1. Maintain regular communication

- Ask for brief updates every few weeks and a formal review at least once a term.
- Ask whether the agreed strategies are working and what changes will be made if there is no progress.
- You can bring your own observations from home (for example, if you notice improvements or new difficulties).
- Do not be afraid to ask for meetings or agreements to be confirmed in writing. This creates a useful record of the process.

2. What to expect from SEND support

- Progress is usually seen after a few months, not immediately.
- Sometimes it takes two or three cycles of "Assess-Plan-Do-Review" before you know if the support is sufficient.
- During that time, the school should demonstrate clear evidence of progress, such as results, examples of work or reports from specialists.
- If after several cycles progress is still limited, the school or family may consider an assessment for an EHCP (more information in the next section).

3. Seek independent guidance if you need it

- If you feel that the school is not listening to you or you do not know how to move forward, contact your local SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service). They offer free, impartial and confidential advice on:
 - How to review the support your child receives.
 - How to participate in meetings or reviews.
 - What to do if the school does not implement the agreed measures.
 - How to prepare if you decide to apply for an EHCP.
- You can find your local SENDIASS service on your local council's website or by asking directly at the school.



How to find support for your child

Support through your GP

Your GP can be a first point of contact if you are concerned about your child's development, behaviour, sleep, mental health or learning.

They can also help if your child is already receiving support at school, but you believe they need clinical assessments or diagnoses to better understand their needs. In some cases, your GP may initiate referrals to the health system if the school has not already done so.

Your GP can:

- Listen to your concerns and assess whether your child needs to see a specialist.
- Refer you directly to NHS services, such as:
 - Community paediatrician – to assess development, learning or possible diagnoses such as ADHD or autism.
 - Speech and language therapy.
 - Occupational therapy, if there are sensory or coordination difficulties.
 - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- Provide reports or medical letters that can support an application for an EHCP assessment.
- Review medication or treatments if your child has a medical condition that affects their well-being or learning.



Specialist hospitals: Evelina London

Sometimes, a child's health or developmental needs require more specialised assessment or treatment than a GP or community paediatrician can offer. In such cases, your GP may refer you to a specialist children's hospital, such as Evelina London, which is part of the NHS and Guy's and St Thomas' Foundation Trust in central London.

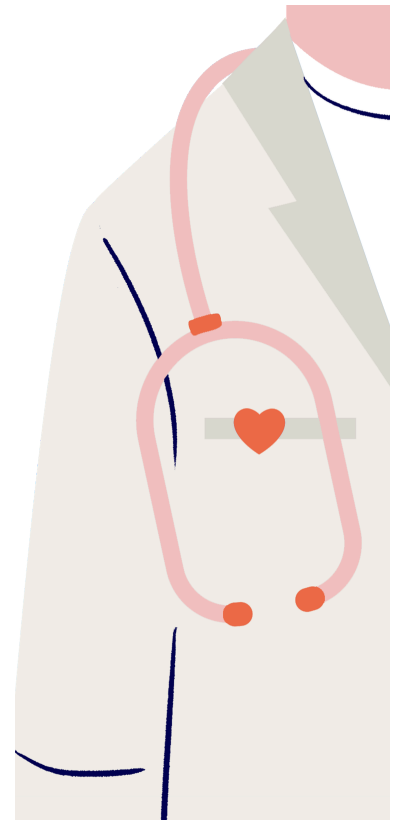
These hospitals offer advanced clinical services for children and young people with complex conditions, and work with paediatricians, therapists and schools to coordinate support.

Evelina London offers:

- Diagnosis and monitoring of complex conditions such as autism, epilepsy, and neurological and genetic conditions, among many others.
- Specialist clinics (with paediatricians, speech therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists).
- Clinical reports that are useful for applying for an EHCP or school support.

To access Evelina or other similar hospitals:

- A medical referral is required, usually from your GP or paediatrician.



Practical Advice



- Keep all reports, letters and emails you receive from your GP and other medical services such as Evelina London. They will be useful if you need to share evidence with your child's school or other services.
- If you do not understand something, you can ask for an interpreter or bring someone you trust who speaks English.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

Some emotional or behavioural difficulties go beyond what the school or GP alone can address. In such cases, it may be helpful to contact Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), the specialist NHS service that supports children and young people with mental health, social or emotional problems.

CAMHS can help if your child presents:

- Severe anxiety or panic attacks.
- Symptoms of depression or persistent sadness.
- Self-harming behaviour or suicidal thoughts.
- Serious emotional difficulties, trauma or emotional regulation problems.
- Severe behavioural problems that affect their daily life or relationships at home and school.



How do you access CAMHS?

- Through referral from your school or GP. In some places, families can apply directly to their local CAMHS service (this depends on the area; check your local NHS website).
- After the referral to CAMHS has been made, you will receive a letter confirming that they have received the application. They will then let you know if your child will be accepted for assessment and give you information about the next steps.



IMPORTANT: CAMHS waiting lists are often very long, so if your child has an urgent mental health need, it is best to go to A&E. You can then inform CAMHS about this change in circumstances so that they can take the urgency of your case into account.

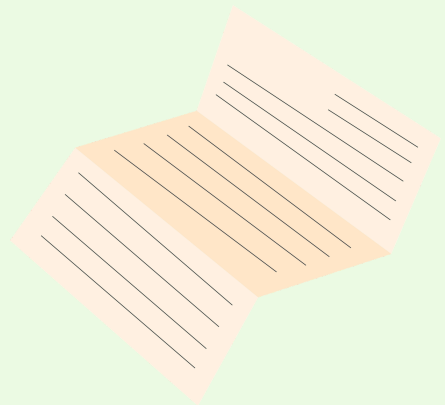
Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

When a child has more complex educational needs or requires more support than the school offers in order to learn, communicate, behave or participate at the same level as their peers, they may need a legal document called an EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan).

This plan describes the child's needs and the specific support they should receive, both at school and from other services (e.g., health or social care).

What is an EHCP needs assessment and why is it important?

Before issuing an EHCP, the Local Education Authority must carry out a formal assessment, called an EHC needs assessment. This assessment is used to determine whether the child or young person has or may have special educational needs and whether they need special provisions through an EHCP.



This assessment helps to understand:

- What difficulties the child has.
- What support they have received so far.
- Whether these difficulties are serious enough to require an EHCP. Remember that not all children with SEN need an EHCP. There are many needs that the school can support without an EHCP.

IMPORTANT:

This assessment is not automatic.

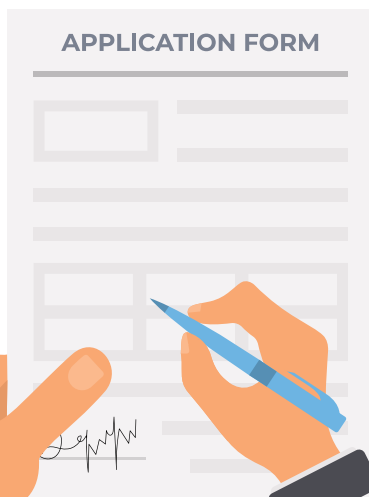
Someone has to request it. This can be the family or the school.

Who can request an assessment?

- You can request it as a parent or guardian, or your child can request it if they are 16 or over.
- The school or college can also make the request if they consider that your child needs more support than they can offer with the school's normal resources.
- Other individuals (such as doctors, therapists, or social workers) may inform the Local Education Authority about your child's needs, but the formal request must come from the family or the educational institution.

How is a request made?

- You must fill out an online application or send an email to the Local Education Authority requesting an EHC needs assessment. You can also ask the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) to do it for you.
- You will need to explain why your child needs an assessment: for example, what difficulties they have, what support they have received so far and why it is not enough.
- You can include reports from the school, notes from the doctor, your own observations, or drawings by the child.
- IPSEA has template letters for this request.



Once the Local Education Authority has received your request, they have six weeks to respond in writing as to whether or not they will carry out the assessment.

Sometimes, the Local Education Authority may refuse a request for an assessment. This may happen if they consider that the school is already offering sufficient support, or if they believe that the child's difficulties do not require an EHCP to be met.

If you disagree with the decision, you have the right to appeal to an independent tribunal called the SEND Tribunal. This tribunal will review whether the Local Education Authority has applied the law correctly. In many cases, appeals are decided in favour of families. IPSEA has a page with the steps to follow if you want to appeal a refusal to assess. There you will find a detailed guide ('Refusal to assess pack') and sample letters to help you prepare your case before the SEND Tribunal.

What happens during an evaluation?

If the Local Authority **accepts** your request to carry out an assessment:

1

They will consult with different professionals:

The local authority will request reports from different professionals who know your child, such as:

- Teachers or SENCo (Special Educational Needs Coordinator at school).
- Speech and language therapists.
- Paediatrician or general practitioner (GP).
- Educational psychologist.
- Social worker, if applicable.

2

They will ask for your opinion and that of your child:

- You will be asked to complete a form to share your experience and opinion about your child.
- They will also gather your child's opinion, adapting it to their age and ability (this may be through forms, drawings or interviews).

3

They will review all the information:

- The local authority then compiles all the reports and opinions into a single document.
- This report will form the basis for deciding whether your child needs an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- This stage usually takes a few weeks and must be completed within a maximum of 16 weeks from the date of the initial application.

What happens after the assessment?

After receiving all the reports, the Local Education Authority decides whether your child needs an EHCP. **This decision must be made within 16 weeks of the assessment being requested.**



- **If they say no:** you can appeal the decision (see information about appeals below).
- **If they say yes:** they will draft an EHCP.

Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

What does the EHCP include?

The EHCP is a legal document divided into **11 sections (A to K)**. Each section must contain clear, specific and detailed information about your child. Here, we explain each section:

Section A – The views, interests and aspirations of your child and family

This section mentions what you and your child, as a family, think about your needs, what you hope for the future, and what kind of help you consider useful. This part should reflect the child's voice and their family context. **It also has your contact information, so make sure it is correct.**

Section C – Related health needs

This section describes the health needs that are related to your child's special educational needs.

If a treatment or therapy contributes to learning or training, the medical need is mentioned here and the corresponding educational provision is explained in Section F.

Section B – The child's educational, health and social needs

This section describes any learning difficulties or disabilities that mean your child needs special educational support.

For example, difficulties with reading or writing, understanding instructions, concentrating, communicating, relating to others, regulating emotions, moving around the classroom or processing sensory information, among others.

Each need should be listed separately and in detail, as it will then have its own support in Section F.

Section D – Social needs related to education

This section explains the social support needs that are related to your child's SEN. It may include aspects of family wellbeing, support at home or community involvement.

Non-educational social support is discussed further in Sections H1 and H2.

What does the EHCP include?

Section E – Expected outcomes

This section sets out specific goals that will help your child achieve the aspirations described in Section A. Outcomes should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound.

Examples of outcomes:

- ‘By the end of the next school year, they will be able to ask for help and express their ideas in class using sentences of at least six words.’
- ‘By the end of the year, they will be able to participate in a game or group activity for 15 minutes with minimal assistance.’
- ‘In two years, they will be able to move around the school independently following routines.’

Sections G to K – Other support and legal details

- G: Includes medical treatment or care required due to the needs described in Section B (physiotherapy, occupational therapy, medication, etc.).
- H1: Services provided for under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, such as home adaptations, transport or short breaks.
- H2: Other necessary or reasonable social support, such as family support, engagement with community or care plans for young people over 18.

Section F – Support and special educational provision

Detail the specific and quantified support your child needs to achieve the outcomes in Section E. You must indicate what support will be given, how, by whom and how often. Examples of provision:

- ‘Two 45-minute speech therapy sessions per week with an NHS therapist, focusing on functional vocabulary and understanding instructions.’
- ‘Support from a classroom assistant for 15 hours per week to reinforce reading and writing through a structured programme.’
- ‘Visual aids and clear routines in each lesson to promote independence and reduce anxiety.’

Everything listed here is legally binding: the Local Education Authority must ensure that it is complied with.

Sections G to K – Other support and legal details

- I: Shows the name and type of school, college or other educational setting indicated in the final plan. The local authority must consider the family's choice and may only refuse it on specific legal grounds.
- J: Details any personal budget or direct payment agreed to fund the supports in the plan. It must be sufficient to cover all the provisions described.
- K: Lists all reports and documents used in drawing up the plan, indicating who prepared them and when.

Why is it important for the EHCP to be specific?

A well-written EHCP should use phrases such as:

- 'The child will receive occupational therapy twice a week with a qualified professional.'
- It should **not** just say: 'The child may benefit from occupational therapy,' as **this is too general and will be difficult to enforce.**



The clearer and more detailed the EHCP is, the easier it will be to demand that it be complied with.

EHCP draft

Once the EHCP draft has been written:

- It will be sent to you for review.
- You will have **15 working days** to review the document and give your opinion.
- You can request corrections if anything is incomplete or incorrect.
- You can also suggest which school you think is best for your child.

! It is important that you review the draft carefully. What is written there is what the school will have to provide.

Finalisation of the EHCP

After considering your comments, the Local Education Authority must:

- Send the finalised EHCP within 20 weeks of the initial application.
- Include the name of the assigned school.

From that point on, the school and the local authority have a legal obligation to comply with the EHCP.

Annual revision of the EHCP

The EHCP must be reviewed once a year at a meeting called the Annual Review.

At this meeting, an assessment is made as to whether the plan is still appropriate or needs to be changed.

- The school must invite the family, the child and the professionals involved.
- You can contribute your observations or request changes if your child's needs have changed.

How to appeal if the authority decides not to issue an EHCP?

If the local authority decides not to issue an EHCP after the assessment, it is also possible to appeal to the SEND Tribunal. This tribunal is free of charge and specialises in cases related to the education of children with special needs.

1

Step 1: Notify your intention to appeal

First, you must contact a mediation service to receive information about the possibility of resolving the conflict without going to court. This is called **'Mediation Advice'**.

- Mediation is not mandatory, but it is mandatory to request this guidance before filing an appeal.
- If you decide not to go to mediation, you will receive a mediation certificate, which must be included with your appeal.

2

Step 2: Submit the appeal form

Next, you must complete the form SEND35.

You must attach:

- The mediation certificate.
- A copy of the decision being appealed (e.g., the letter of rejection from the local authority).
- Any evidence or reports supporting your case.

Organisations such as SOS!SEN can help you complete the form.

If you would like more information on how to appeal, the IPSEA website has useful guides and templates.

How much time do you have to submit an appeal?

You usually have 2 months from the date of the decision letter, or 1 month after receiving the mediation certificate, whichever is later.

If you don't speak English well

You have the right to request an interpreter during the process. You can also send letters or reports in other languages if you do not have a translation, although it is helpful to include translations whenever possible.

What happens after you submit the appeal?

(1) The tribunal reviews the application and sets a hearing date.

This may be in person or by video call.

(2) You will receive a timetable for the process.

This timetable includes deadlines for submitting additional documents or evidence.

(3) You will have the opportunity to explain your case:

You can do this alone, with a legal representative, or with the support of someone you trust (such as an NGO advisor).

(4) The tribunal will make a legally binding decision.

If they rule in your favour, the Local Education Authority must follow that decision.

Free guidance and support:

- IPSEA: offers legal advice, sample letters and more detailed information. www.ipsea.org.uk
- SOS!SEN: helpline and support for appeals. www.sossen.org.uk
- Contact: general support for families with children with disabilities. www.contact.org.uk
- Local organisations such as IRMO can also help or support you through the process.



Schools and educational options

There are different types of state schools in the English education system. Some offer more support for children with special educational needs, so it is important to know your options and understand which one may be best for your child according to their needs.

1. Mainstream schools

These are the ordinary schools that most children attend. Although they do not specialise in students with SEN, they are required by law to admit and support students with additional needs.

Examples of SEND support that mainstream schools can offer (depending on the school):

- Additional support in the classroom.
- Teaching adaptations.
- Access to therapists or specialists who visit the school.
- Intervention programmes or personalised sessions.

Some children with EHCPs can attend a mainstream school if it has the appropriate support to meet their needs.

2. Mainstream schools with resource bases

These are mainstream schools that have a specialised space or unit for certain types of needs (such as autism, language difficulties, etc.).

Examples of SEND support that schools with resource bases can offer (depending on the school):

- Specialised professionals.
- Smaller groups and greater support.
- Opportunities for the child to spend part of the time in regular classes and part in the unit, depending on their level.

This model combines elements of mainstream schools with specialised support.

Schools and educational options

3. Special needs schools or specialist provision

These are schools specifically designed for students with multiple or complex educational needs.

Examples of SEND support that special needs schools can offer:

- Small class sizes.
- Teachers trained in special education.
- Direct and constant access to speech therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, etc.
- A more structured and adapted environment.



Not all children with EHCPs need a special school, but they can be suitable for those who need daily support. To apply to one of these schools, the student must have an EHCP.

4. Home-school or EOTAS - Education otherwise than at school

Home education is an option specifically for students with complex or multiple special educational needs.

Examples of SEND support that home education can offer:

- Online learning
- A tutor trained in special educational needs
- Direct access to speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, etc.
- A routine and learning environment better tailored to your child



Tips for choosing a school

- **Visit the school:** make an appointment to understand how they work and what support they offer.
- **Ask questions:** for example, do they have experience with children like yours? Is there a resource base? How do they communicate with families?
- **Talk to other families:** their experience can help you make a decision.
- Ask if you can attend with an interpreter.

Schools and educational options

Who decides which school is most suitable?

If your child has an EHCP, the Local Education Authority must consult with several schools during the plan drafting process. As a parent or carer, you can:

- Express your school preference.
- Visit schools before making a decision.
- Explain why a school is not suitable if you disagree with the choice.

Your opinion is important, and the Local Education Authority must take it into account by law.

What if you are not offered a place at your school of preference?

You can ask the Local Authority to name your preferred school in the EHCP during the draft review. This requires them to consult with the school to see whether they can accommodate your child. If the Local Education Authority refuses to allocate that school, you can appeal to the SEND Tribunal (see Section 4).

And what should I do if my child has been excluded from school?

You can request an official written notice explaining the reasons for the exclusion and its duration. Remember that “informal” exclusions are not legal, and the school must always follow a fair and proportionate process. If you believe the decision is unfair or related to your child’s needs, you can speak with the school and seek support from SENDIASS.

Options for young people and adults (18-25 years old)

When a young person with SEND turns 18, they can continue to receive support, but the focus changes:

- The EHCP can continue until the age of 25 if the young person still needs help achieving their educational or training goals.
- From the age of 18, the Local Education Authority will review each year whether the EHCP is still necessary.
- Support focuses more on the transition to adult life, including education, employment, health and participation in the community.
- Support from adult services, such as social or health care, may also come into play, rather than children's services.

Job opportunities and apprenticeships for young people with SEND

In addition to traditional education, there are different options that combine training and employment:

- **Apprenticeships:**
 - These are programmes that combine paid work with practical and theoretical training.
 - There are apprenticeships adapted for young people with SEND, which offer extra support according to their needs.
- **Traineeships:**
 - These are short programmes for young people aged 16 to 24 who are not yet ready for an apprenticeship or employment.
 - They include work experience, maths and English classes, and support in employability skills.
- **Supported Internships:**
 - These are specially designed for young people with SEND.
 - They combine work experience in a company with support from a mentor or job coach.
 - They help young people gain real experience and increase their chances of finding stable employment.



How to find out about and apply for these programmes?

- **Talk to your school or college:** the SENCo or careers advisor usually has information about local programmes and can help you with the application.
- **Search the official government website:** at www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship you will find apprenticeship opportunities across the country. There is also information about traineeships and supported internships.
- **Contact your Local Education Authority:** your borough's Local Offer publishes employment preparation programmes and support for young people with SEND.
- **Specialist organisations:** groups such as DFN Project SEARCH, Mencap and Disability Rights UK offer tailored employment programmes for young people with SEND.
- **Jobcentre Plus:** can advise you on job opportunities, preparation courses and support programmes for young people with disabilities.

How to change schools

Sometimes, families feel that their child's current school is not adequately meeting their needs. This may be due to a lack of support, communication problems with staff, or simply because the environment is not suitable for their child's learning. In other cases, you may want to change your child's school because you have moved to a new area. Here we explain what you can do if you want to change your child's school, depending on whether or not they have an EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan).

If your child does NOT have an EHCP:

1) Find a new school

You can search for schools in your area with vacancies for the relevant school year. You can ask your Local Authority for help or search their website, where they usually publish a list of schools with available places.

2) Apply for a place directly

This is called an in-year admission application.

You must complete the relevant form (usually available on the Local Education Authority's website) or contact the new school directly if they manage their own admissions (to find out if the school manages its own admissions, or if you should apply directly to the Local Education Authority, you can check the website or send them an email).

3) Inform your current school

It is very important not to withdraw your child from their current school until you have confirmed a place at the new school.



If the Local Education Authority does not respond or there are delays

They generally have a legal deadline of 10-20 school days to respond to applications outside the regular deadline. If you do not receive a response, you can make a formal complaint. Each local authority has an email address to which you can send a complaint.

How to change schools

If your child does have an EHCP:

You have two options.

A Option A: Request an early review of the EHCP

You can write to the Local Authority or the EHCP coordinator at any time to request an early review of the EHCP, explaining why you believe the current school is no longer suitable.

How to do it?

- Write an email or letter addressed to the EHCP team at the Local Education Authority.
- Clearly explain:
 - That you want the EHCP to be reviewed.
 - Why the current school no longer meets your child's needs.
 - Which school you are proposing as an alternative.
- Attach any evidence you have:
 - Reports from professionals.
 - Notes about difficulties at the current school.
 - Your own experience as a family.

B Option B: Wait for the annual EHCP review

If the next review is coming up soon (e.g., less than 3 months), you can wait and request that the school change be discussed at that meeting.

Important:

- You can propose a new school at the annual review.
- The Local Education Authority is obliged to consult with that school.

What evidence can help you justify the proposed change?

- Reports from educational psychologists, speech therapists, paediatricians, etc.
- Records of exclusions or disciplinary actions.
- Evidence that your child is not progressing academically or has been affected emotionally.
- Notes from school meetings reflecting a lack of adaptations.
- Written testimonials (from you, the child, or other professionals).
- Your voice as a parent/carer also counts as evidence. You can write a testimonial explaining how the situation affects your child at home and why the current environment is not suitable.

How to change schools

What happens after you submit the request?

1. The Local Education Authority must consult with the school you propose.
2. If the school accepts, the Authority must include it in section I of the EHCP.
3. They will send you a draft of the updated EHCP.
4. You will have 15 days to accept the change or request corrections.
5. Once finalised, the new school must prepare for the transition.

What happens if your preferred school rejects your child?

When your child has an EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) and you express a preference for a new school, the Local Education Authority is obliged to formally consult with that school before making a decision.

The school may reject your child, but it can only do so for three very specific legal reasons:

1

Because the school is not suitable for the child's age, abilities, needs or level of learning.

(For example, if it is a school for students with moderate difficulties and your child needs a highly specialised environment.)

2

If accepting the child would adversely affect the learning of other students.

(For example, if there are serious concerns about the new child's behaviour without adequate support.)

3

If accepting the child would be an inefficient use of public resources.

(For example, if the school does not have sufficient budget or staff and cannot adapt.)

Practical support for everyday life

In addition to the support your child receives at school, they may be entitled to other forms of assistance for their day-to-day lives. This support is designed to improve their wellbeing, facilitate participation in education and ease the burden on the family.

1. Free school transport

If your child has an EHCP and is unable to walk to school due to their condition or because the assigned school is far away, you can request free transport from the Local Education Authority.

This transport may be:

- A school taxi with a driver and an accompanying adult
- An adapted minibus
- Reimbursement for expenses if you take your child to school.



You must apply through the Local Education Authority's school transport team. In some cases, you can also apply without an EHCP, citing specific medical or safety reasons.

Practical support for everyday life

2. Access to therapies

Some children need specific therapies that are not always offered within the school.

These may include:

- Speech and language therapy.
- Occupational therapy.
- Physiotherapy.
- Psychological or emotional support.



Always keep reports and referral letters. They serve as evidence if you need to request additional help.

How to access these services?

- **Through the EHCP:** if the need is recognised in the plan, access must be arranged.
- **Through your GP:** you can request a referral.
- In some cases, through community services or local foundations.

3. Support outside school hours

Many families can also access programmes such as:

- After-school activities for children with SEND
- Respite time for carers (e.g. camps, clubs)
- Support during school holidays
- Short Breaks: support for children with SEND during the holidays
- Personal Budget: funding from the EHCP to access specific support

Ask the school, the Local Authority (you can look up the “Local Offer” on your local authority’s website), or community centres and Children’s Centres about these options.

Practical support for everyday life

Financial assistance

If you care for a child with a disability, you may be entitled to additional financial support. Some common forms of assistance are:

- **Disability Living Allowance (DLA):** monthly financial assistance for children with disabilities.
- **Carer's Allowance:** for people who care for a child with DLA, under certain conditions.
- **Local subsidies or support for low-income families:** each local council may offer different forms of support.

Organisations such as Contact and IRMO can help you find out if you are eligible and how to apply.

Other financial assistance and grants

There are also organisations such as Family Fund, Newlife Foundation, Children Today, AbleKidz and Elifar Foundation, among others, which offer grants for specialist equipment, adapted technology or practical support for children and young people with SEND. When applying, it is important to check the age limit, financial criteria, and whether the equipment has already been requested unsuccessfully from the NHS, school, or social services, as most funds require this justification.

5. Home adaptations

Some families can access grants to make their home safer and more comfortable for their child, for example:

- Support rails.
- Ramps.
- Adapted bathrooms.
- Risk reduction systems (such as special locks or sensors).

This can be requested through the local council's adapted housing service, or with the support of a social worker.

Mental health, wellbeing, and support networks

Caring for a child with special educational needs can be very rewarding, but also exhausting and lonely. Many migrant families face this reality without their support network nearby, with language barriers, and with little information on how to take care of themselves.

This section is dedicated to your wellbeing as a parent or carer, and to the emotional support of your child.

1. Your child's mental health

Children with special educational needs can also face:

- Anxiety or stress surrounding school.
- Low self-esteem due to comparing themselves to others.
- Difficulties making friends or communicating.
- Sadness, confusion, or frustration.

Where to find support?

- **CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services):** Public mental health service for children and adolescents.
- **School:** you can request sessions with a counsellor or school emotional support worker.
- **NGOs or community projects:** some offer therapeutic activities or creative groups.



Do not wait for a diagnosis to ask for help. If you notice a change in your child's behaviour, you can talk to the school or your GP.

Mental health, wellbeing, and support networks

2. Your wellbeing as a carer

It is very common for mothers, fathers or carers to:

- Feel guilty, sad or stressed.
- Not have time for themselves.
- Have difficulty sleeping, resting or socialising.



Support options:

- **Counselling or emotional support for carers:** some NHS services and various NGOs offer free or low-cost therapy. In many places, sessions are available in Spanish or with an interpreter. You can ask your GP or search online for “IAPT” + your borough.
- **Wellness activities:** yoga, dance, walking, artistic or creative activities. Some local authorities have free or low-cost programmes for carers.
- **Respite care:** your local authority can arrange temporary support for your child (e.g., day care or short stays) while you take a break. Ask your social worker or contact your borough's disability services directly.
- **Community networks:** organisations such as Contact, Carers UK or local SEND groups can offer information, events and workshops for families.

If you would like to join **Familias Neurodiversas**, a network of Latin American families, you can contact them at info@familiasneurodiversas.com

Glossary

The education system in the United Kingdom uses many technical terms and acronyms in English. This glossary will help you understand them.

SEND

Special educational needs and disability.

EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan)

A legal document that describes a child's needs and the support they should receive in education, health and care.

EHC needs assessment

A formal assessment to decide whether a child needs an EHCP.

Local Educational Authority

The council that manages schools in your area.

SENCo (Special Educational Needs Coordinator)

Person within the school responsible for coordinating support for children with special needs.

Mainstream school

A school for all children, with or without special educational needs.

Special school / specialist provision

Specialist school for children with complex educational needs.

Resource base

Specialist unit or classroom within a mainstream school.

Glossary

CAMHS

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

Therapy (speech, occupational, etc.)

Therapy for young people who need support with speech, language, etc.

SEN Support

School support for special educational needs, without the need for an EHCP.

Annual Review

A mandatory review of an EHCP by the local authority.

Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

Monthly financial assistance for children with disabilities.

Carer's Allowance

Financial assistance for those who care for a child with special needs.

SEND Tribunal

Specialised tribunal where you can appeal decisions made by the Local Education Authority.

Mediation

Voluntary process to resolve disputes before going to court.

Useful sources of information

Topic	Organisation or resource	What they offer
Rights and legal advice regarding SEND	IPSEA www.ipsea.org.uk	National organisation offering free legal advice, letter templates and guides on EHCPs, appeals and educational rights.
	SOS!SEN www.sossen.org.uk	Provides practical guidance and workshops for families facing difficulties with schools or local authorities.
	Just for Kids Law www.justforkidslaw.org	Legal and advocacy assistance for young people and families, especially in cases of school exclusion or lack of a spot in school.
Education and the SEND system	Council for Disabled Children (CDC) www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk	National network bringing together experts and families. Explains how the SEND system works and promotes good practice in schools and local authorities.
	Department for Education – SEND Code of Practice SEND Code (0–25) .	Official guide used by schools and local authorities to apply the law.
	GOV.UK – Educação especial e deficiências www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs	General information on educational rights and support in England.

Useful sources of information

Topic	Organisation or resource	What they offer
Free, local support	SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service) www.kids.org.uk/sendiaass	Free and confidential service available in every borough. Offers individual guidance in multiple languages on school support, mediation and EHCPs.
	Familias Neurodiversas (Facebook / WhatsApp)	Network of Latin American families with neurodivergent children in the UK. Offers support groups, experience sharing and community activities.
Health and wellbeing	NHS – Children and Young People’s Mental Health (CAMHS) www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults	Information on child and adolescent mental health, access to CAMHS and guidance for families.
	YoungMinds www.youngminds.org.uk	National NGO offering guidance and resources on the emotional wellbeing of children and adolescents.
Conditions and neurodiversity	Contact www.contact.org.uk	Organisation supporting families with children with disabilities or medical conditions. Offers guidance, groups and financial advice.
	National Autistic Society (NAS) www.autism.org.uk	Guides on autism, educational rights, diagnoses and strategies for families.



Unit 9, Warwick House • Overton Road • SW9 7JP • Brixton • London

info@irmo.org.uk

www.irmo.org.uk