# **What is SENDIASS and what does it do?**

SENDIASS stands for Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service. Each Local Authority has to have its own SENDIASS who offers free, impartial and confidential information, advice and support to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their parents and carers. We can also offer advice to professionals who support children and young people with SEN and their families.

# **How do I decide which school is best for my child?**

This question applies whether you have a child starting school at 5, when they are transferring to secondary school or when expressing a preference for a placement in an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

All children are different and all schools are different. The best way to decide which school will suit your child and meet their needs is to visit a range of schools to get an idea of what is available, where your child will fit in and be well supported.

Each school has their own website and a section which tells you how they support children with SEND. This is often the first place to look when you are thinking about which school to choose. Looking at the schools SEND information report is usually a good place to look. You will find this on the school website.

It can be helpful to talk to other parents who live locally; perhaps asking a question on the Waltham Forest Parent Forum and you can ask about the schools and get advice from other parents who have knowledge and familiarity of the schools in question. Because information about schools can very quickly go out of date, it is good to talk to parents who have children in those schools currently.

If you are deciding which school to name in your child’s EHCP, the discussions you had when writing their EHCP with professionals who know your child well may give you some pointers as to which school can best meet your child’s needs. Most children stay in the same local mainstream school they attended before they had the EHCP.

You can also contact SENDIASS to talk things through.

# **What is a Special Educational Need (SEN) and SEN Support?**

Children and young people have special educational needs (SEN) if they have a learning difficulty which means they need extra support to help them learn or take part in activities in school or college. We often refer to it as SEND which means special educational needs and disabilities.

When a school identifies a child as having Special Educational Needs (SEN) they will consult with you, any teachers involved in teaching your child and the school SENCO.  Together the decide what help is needed and arrange for this to be provided as part of daily lessons. This is SEN Support and should be written down in a plan.

Help that can be provided includes:

* different learning materials or special equipment
* group or individual support such as an individual behaviour management programme
* more adult time for planning help and monitoring its effectiveness
* training for staff to enable them to give the child more effective support

The written SEN Support plan should be reviewed regularly to make sure it’s working and if it’s not then changes can be made until they get it right. This is called the ‘graduated approach’ with four stages of action: assess, plan, do and review.

# **What happens when my child is identified as having special educational needs?**

When your child is identified as having a special educational need, the setting or school should provide extra help in the classroom and make any reasonable adjustments necessary to meet these needs. The setting or school should use a graduated approach to assess what the needs are, create a plan of how to help and review the plan each term to see if it is working. If the plan isn’t working then it may be necessary to make more changes and see what else might help.

Keeping in touch with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) in school will help you understand what the school is doing to support your child. If you have any worries about your child’s SEND the SENCO should be the first person to contact.

# **I think my child has SEN, but the school doesn’t. What can I do next?**

If you think your child has SEN then you can ask for a meeting with your child’s class teacher to talk through your concerns. It is a good idea to ask for meeting rather than just try to catch the teacher at the start or end of the school day when they are busy.

Questions you can ask at the meeting might include:

• How are you measuring my child’s progress against Age Related Expectations?  
• Where have you assessed my child as being at the moment?  
• In which areas or skills has my child made progress this year?  
• What are my child’s next steps in learning?  
• How are you supporting my child to make progress in…?  
• You’ve told me that my child is not yet working at Age Related Expectations, what  
additional support is available to help him/her?

If you are still concerned after you have spoken to the class teacher you can ask them to include the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). They have responsibility for what happens on a day to day basis in the school for pupils with SEN and also provides advice to other teachers in the school to help all pupils with SEN to make progress.

# **My child has SEN and needs more help at school, what help are they entitled to?**

As your child already has identified Special Educational Needs, it is a good idea to ask to meet with your child’s class teacher, form tutor or the pre school setting leader and the Special Educational Needs co-ordinator (SENCO) or inclusion co-ordinator. You may already have a review meeting arranged to look at your child’s progress and support. If not, you can ask for one to be set up.

You can explain at the meeting why you think your child needs more help, perhaps you feel they are not making progress, falling further behind or just telling you or showing you they are unhappy at school. You can ask to see evidence of the progress your child is making and talk through any changes to support that would help. You can look at their individual progress tracker and see which targets your child has achieved and what support helps them learn.

The amount of support you can expect your child to have depends on whether your child receives support at the level called SEN Support or has an Education, Health and Care Plan. Whichever stage your child is at, you can expect them to be given the right level of support to help them learn and make progress.

If your child is not making progress, then perhaps they need more individual support, more targeted support or a different approach to helping them learn.

The school could offer increased support or adapt the ways they are teaching them. The school should always be able to show you what support your child is getting and how they are monitoring their progress, who else is involved in planning their support, for example, an educational psychologist or speech and language therapist and how they are following their advice.

# **My child with SEN is not doing well at school and I am wondering about taking them out of school teaching them at home. How do I go about it?**

Home educating your child is always an option and an increasing number of parents are doing just that. It is a big decision and before you take your child off a school roll, you need to think about why you have decided to take this step.

Some parents take their child out of school as a last resort rather than a real choice or desire to do so because they feel their child’s special educational needs are not being met. If this is the case, it might be better to ring SENDIASS to talk things through and see if by discussing things with school, your child might be able to receive more appropriate support.

If your child has an Education,Health and Care plan (EHCP), it might be a good idea to ask for an early Annual Review to discuss why you are taking your child out of school and home educating so that the placement in their EHCP can be changed to show that.

If the school is a special school, the local authority must give consent for your child’s name to be removed from a school roll, but this should not be a long or complex process.

If you child doesn’t have an EHCP, you can follow the advice on [‘Homeschooling’](https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/schools-education-and-learning/schools-and-colleges/home-schooling) which is on Waltham Forest Local Offer.

# **Who is my child’s SEN officer? What does a SEN officer do?**

A SEN Officer is the primary and first point of contact for a child or young person (and their family) with a Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The SEND Code of Practice 2015 sets out statutory guidance that the Local Authority, Children’s Trust, education settings and health bodies must take account of in carrying out their respective duties in respect of children and young people aged 0-25.

The Local Authority has a duty to identify, assess and make provision to meet the special educational and wider needs of children within its area and to monitor progress against outcomes. From September 2014 all new statutory assessments and Plans will consider education, health and care needs, outcomes and appropriate provision. This does not mean that a child must have needs in all these areas but they will have special educational needs.

The SEN team oversee the application, production, review and commissioning of special educational provision for children and young people with SEND, who need support above what is normally provided within education settings, and have an EHCP. SEND teams create and update documents that support children and young people with SEND. They also:

* oversee and coordinate requests for education, health, and care needs assessments
* keep you informed about the decisions the LA make
* make sure your family, child, or young person is supported
* work with the right education provider to make sure your kid is getting the right kind of education
* oversee the annual review process
* manage paperwork for children and young people moving in and out of the borough

You can find out more about what the SEN service do on the [local offer](https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/schools-education-and-learning/local-offer-special-educational-needs-and-disability-send/social-care-and-short-breaks/our-send-service) and find details [here](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fthehub-beta.walthamforest.gov.uk%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2F2022-06%2FWF_SEND_Service_Contact_List_June_2022.doc&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK) on how to contact them.

My child’s school is suggesting my child starts attending school for only part of the day?  Do I have to agree?

Sometimes if a child or young person is finding it difficult to manage a whole day at school, perhaps because they have behavioural difficulties and there are concerns about this leading to an exclusion or they are feeling anxious about school and are reluctant to attend, a school might suggest a part- time time-table.

They should not be used because there is not enough support for your child in school. Before any decision is made you should be able to discuss things with school and others and a risk assessment should be carried out. There may be better alternatives.  The school must inform the local authority (LA) that your child is only attending part- time and the reduced time-table has to be reviewed regularly.

You don’t have to agree to a reduced time table and if your child has an Education Health and Care plan you should contact your child’s SEN officer at the LA before making a decision. In any case, a reduced time table should only be a short-term measure intended to help your child successfully return to school full time as they are entitled to do.

You can access the latest [DfE guidance on the use of part-time timetables](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073591/School_attendance_guidance_May-2022.pdf) (page 17).

# **What is an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and Needs Assessment?**

An Education, Health and Care Plan is a legal document which sets out what support children with SEN and disabilities should get in school.

You can speak to your child’s school or nursery about whether an EHC Assessment would be helpful and if they agree they will ask the Local Authority to make an assessment.

An Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment is an assessment for children and young people with SEN and disabilities to help decide what support they need and which services can provide this.

Information is gathered from lots of different people including the child, parents and carers, schools and other professionals to find out what extra support a child or young person needs.

When a request for an assessment is made the local authority has 6 weeks to look at the application information to help them decide if an assessment will be undertaken.

After an assessment has been completed, if the local authority agree to issue an EHCP, they have up to 20 weeks to complete it. This is from the date that the assessment was originally requested.

If the local authority decide that they will not complete the assessment they will let you know in writing. The local authority will also let you know of your rights to appeal against the decision if you disagree. You can contact us for more information if you need it or check out the [SEND Local Offer EHCP page](https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/schools-education-and-learning/local-offer-special-educational-needs-and-disability-send/education-health-and-care-plans-ehcp).

# **What happens once an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) is issued?**

Once issued, an EHCP is reviewed at least once a year, or every 6 months for children under the age of 5. This is called an Annual Review.

If your child or young person is not making progress, needs to move to a different education setting, or if you feel the content of the EHCP needs updating you should request an early Annual Review meeting by contacting the local authority SEND Team (SEND officer) or by talking to your child or young person’s setting SENCO. You can ask the local authority to hold a review at any stage in the year and do not need to wait until the next review is due.

If you don’t agree with the content of an EHCP, including the education setting named in section I, you can appeal to the SEND Tribunal. We will explain this process to you and you can seek further support from SENDIASS.

# [**Is an EHC Plan a legal document? Which sections are legally binding?**](https://www.sendiass-oxfordshire.org.uk/education-health-and-care-plans-ehcp/)

The EHC Plan is a legal document, and the Local Authority must secure the special educational provision specified in the EHC Plan.

If you or your young person are not happy with the finalised EHC Plan and are unable to reach agreement with the local authority, you can appeal against some parts of it to the SEN and Disability Tribunal.

You can appeal against:

• Part B, which describes the child or young person’s SEN,

• Part F which specifies the provision necessary to meet each and very need described in Part B

• or Part I, which names the school or setting the child or young person will attend.

# **Will parents receive a copy of completed EHC Plan for approval?**

 Much of the EHC Plan will be written at a meeting where you as parents, your child or young person, if they are able, will work together with professionals to decide what information on strengths, needs, provision and outcomes should be included in the EHC Plan. Your and your child’s views will be at the centre of the process so you will have a much clearer idea of what your child’s EHC Plan will look like.

After the meeting, the SEN Officer will pull together the information and the outcomes that were decided at the meeting and include those in a draft EHC Plan. This will be sent to you, or your young person if they are over 16 and able to make decisions for themselves, to read and to agree.  You will be given 15 days to get back to the local authority about the content of the EHC Plan.

You will also be asked to fill in the name of the particular setting, school or college that you would like to be named in Part I.

Once the EHCP is finalised, you, or your young person if they are over 16 and able to make decisions for themselves, will receive a copy, with a letter explaining what you can do if you are not happy with the finalised plan.

# **What happens if a child is in out of county provision – which authority’s format for an EHC Plan would be used?**

The Local Authority where the child normally lives, also sometimes called the ‘home authority’, is responsible for the child or young person.

# **What if there is a change of need after the EHC Plan been set up?**

There is a review process for an EHC Plan. It will be reviewed annually if a child is over five. For children 0 – 5 the local authority should consider reviewing the EHC plan every three to six months as a young child can change so much in a short time.

If there is a sudden change in a child or young person’s learning needs, you could request an interim review of your child’s EHC Plan

If there are specific changes to a child’s health or circumstances that mean the health or social provision need changing, the EHC Plan can be amended without a full review or re-assessment.

# **What happens if child can’t give their views during the EHC plan needs assessment?  Is this taken into consideration?**

Your child or young person is at the centre of this process so their views and hopes for the future are very important and hopefully with support many of them will be able to express their views.

Obviously for some children or young people expressing their wishes themselves isn’t possible, but there are other ways of including their views, their dislikes. You and their brothers or sisters know them best and can fill in the ‘All About Me’ and help others understand what they need.

# **Who should make the request for an EHC Plan, the parent or the professional?**

A child or young person’s school or setting can make a request, as can a parent. Under the new law, a young person (16-25) can also make a request themselves.

In making its decision about whether a child or young person needs an EHC Needs assessment the local authority has to look at what support has already been provided and whether there has been any progress. If a school or setting makes the request, they will able to provide evidence of support, attainment and rate of progress.

Click here for more information from the local offer on how to make a [request](https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/schools-education-and-learning/local-offer-special-educational-needs-and-disability-send/education-health-and-care-plans-ehcp/referrals-and-assessments-early-health-and-care-plans).

# **Should hours of support be specified on an EHC Plan?**

The Code of Practice says that provision must be detailed and specific and should normally be quantified, for example, in terms of the type, hours and frequency of support and level of expertise. There should be an emphasis on ‘outcomes’ i.e. what your child wants to be able to do or achieve, so the level of support needed will be tailored to helping them making progress towards the outcomes.