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Special educational needs assessment and planning

A guide for parents and carers

ISLE of WIGHT COUNCIL

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Introduction

This guide will help you to understand:

- what special educational needs are;
- how special educational needs are identified and assessed;
- how the support your child needs is decided;
- your rights and your child's rights; and
- young people's rights.

Basic principles

As you read this guide, the basic things to keep in mind are:

- all children/young people with special educational needs will have their needs met;
- the special educational needs of children/young people can normally be met by schools and early years settings;
- you and your child will be placed at the centre of all processes, and your views and wishes will be listened to;
- you have a vital role to play in supporting your child's education;
- children and young people of all ages who have special educational needs, will get a broad, well-balanced and relevant education.

Special educational needs – what does it mean?

The term 'special educational needs' has a legal definition. All children/young people with special educational needs have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children/young people of the same age. They may need extra or different help from that given to other children/young people of the same age.

Children/young people with special educational needs (SEN) may require

extra help because of a range of needs, such as in thinking and understanding, physical and sensory difficulties, emotional and social difficulties, their speech, language and communication and how they might relate to and behave with other people.

Many children/young people will have special educational needs of some kind at some time during their education. Schools and other organisations can help most children/young people overcome their difficulties quickly and easily. However, a small number of children/young people will need extra help for some or all of their time in education. For example, special educational needs could mean that a child has difficulties with:

- all of their school work;
- reading, writing, number work or understanding information;
- expressing themselves, or understanding what others are saying;
- making friends or relating to adults;
- behaving appropriately;
- organising themselves;
- sensory and/or physical needs which may affect their education.

Help for children/young people with special educational needs will usually be able to be organised in their local mainstream school or early years setting, sometimes with the help of other organisations.

The government has set out the early learning goals in the foundation stage. These are things that most children/young people should be able to do by the end of their reception year in primary school. The national curriculum for children/young people from five to 16 years also sets out what most children/young people will learn at each stage of their education.

Children/young people make progress at different rates and have different ways in which they learn best. Teachers are expected to take account of this by looking carefully at how they organise their lessons, the classroom, the books and materials they give to each child and the way they teach. All teachers will consider a number of options and choose the most appropriate ways to help each child learn from a range of activities. This is often described as 'differentiating the curriculum'.

Children/young people who make slower progress or have particular difficulties in one area may be given extra help or different lessons to help them succeed but this does not necessarily mean they have special educational needs.

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What can you do if you are worried about your child?

Your child's early years are a very important time for their physical, emotional, intellectual and social development. When your health visitor or doctor makes a routine check, they might suggest that there could be a problem. If you have any worries of your own, you should get advice straightaway.

If your child is not yet at school or nursery, you can talk to your doctor or health visitor who will be able to give you advice about the next steps to take.

If you think your child may have special educational needs that have not been identified by their school or nursery, you will need to talk to your child's teacher, or ask to the see the SENCo (this is the person in the school who has a particular responsibility for coordinating help for children/young people with special educational needs) or headteacher. You will be able to talk about your concerns and find out what the school thinks.

Working together with your child's teachers will often help to sort out worries and problems. The closer you work with them, the more successful any help for your child will be. **Remember – you know your child better than anyone**.

You might like to ask if:

- the school thinks your child has difficulties;
- the school thinks your child has special educational needs;
- your child is able to work at the same level as other children the same age;
- your child is already getting some extra help;
- you can help your child yourself.

Organisations you can get help from are:

- Parent Partnership, also known as the SEN and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS);
- child health services;
- social care services;
- local voluntary organisations, mainly charities (local offer).

Support for special educational needs

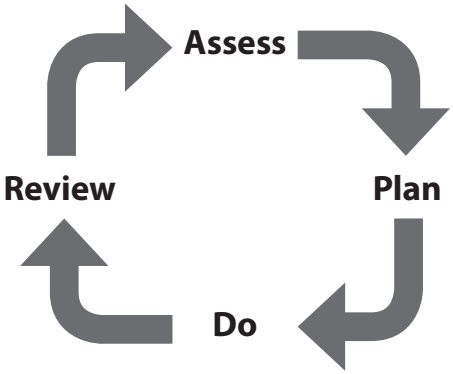
The **Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (2014)** gives guidance to all people who help to identify, assess and provide extra support for children/young people with special educational needs.

All early years settings, schools, academies and colleges are responsible for meeting special educational needs through teaching that is adapted and personalised for individual children/young people. Some children/young people will need support that is **additional to** or **different from** that which is provided for most of their peers. This kind of help is called **special educational provision** and all education settings must make every effort to ensure that this is in place for children/young people who need it.

You can download a free copy of the code of practice from the Department for Education: www.education.gov.uk.

The graduated approach

When a special educational need has been identified, the education setting should start a cycle of actions to make sure they put effective support in place. This cycle is called the graduated approach and involves these stages:



The graduated approach recognises that children/young people learn in different ways and can have different kinds and levels of special educational needs. Using the action cycle makes sure that specialist help is brought in step by step to help the setting, school or college support the difficulties a child or young person might be having.

Children/young people might need help through the graduated approach for only a short time, or for many years even, perhaps, for the whole of their education. Different education settings will use the action cycle in different ways. However, no matter how they choose to take account of this guidance, if your child has SEN, you will be consulted at each stage.

There are lots of professionals that can help education providers to support children/young people and they will be involved through the graduated approach, depending on your child's needs. For example, they might ask for help from a specialist teacher, an educational psychologist, a speech and language therapist or other health professional.

What if you disagree?

If you disagree with what your child's education setting are saying, you should make your views known to them. If you would like to help to express your views or support if you need it, you can get in touch with Parent Partnership, which is also known as the SEN and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS).

What is an education, health and care needs assessment?

An education, health and care needs assessment is a co-ordinated and detailed exploration to find out if your child has special educational needs. An education, health and care needs assessment is only necessary if your child's education setting cannot provide all of the help that they need and will usually only happen after the graduated approach has been followed. The assessment will also identify any needs in the area of health and social care.

Any professional working to support your child can request that the local authority (LA) carries out an education, health and care needs assessment. Requests are most often made by the SENCo or the headteacher of your child's education setting, but can be made at any time from birth to the age of 25. You can talk to any of the people who support your child about an assessment and, if they agree that an assessment is needed, they should sit down with you to complete the request form.

You or your child can also make a request for an assessment by writing to the SEN assessment and review team at the following address:

Thompson House,
Sandy Lane,
Newport,
Isle of Wight
PO3O 3NA

In your letter you will need to include your child's name, date of birth, which education setting they attend and reasons why you feel that an education, health and care needs assessment is needed.

On the Isle of Wight, once a request has been received, the assessment will be co-ordinated by the local authority's SEN assessment and review team and you will have an allocated casework officer within the team who you can contact throughout the assessment and afterwards.

How long will you have to wait for the local authority to decide if your child should be assessed?

The local authority has an SEN panel which meets to consider requests for education, health and care needs assessments. This panel includes representatives from education, health and social care and meets every week during the school term.

When the SEN assessment and review team receives the request for an education, health and care needs assessment, they will send you a letter confirming this and an 'Our story' to complete and return. You will then have a maximum of six weeks to wait before you find out if the SEN panel has agreed that an assessment should be started.

It is important that the request for an assessment contains as much information as possible so that the panel can make the right decision about whether or not to start the assessment. The panel might ask for more information if it is felt that there is not enough detail to make a decision.

After the SEN panel meeting, your casework officer will write to you to let you know what has been decided. If it is decided that your child does not need an assessment, and you disagree with this decision, you can ask to meet with your casework officer to discuss the reasons for this decision. You can also talk to the Parent Partnership, which is also known as the SEN and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS), and/or ask for details of our mediation service. A person from the Parent Partnership service (SENDIASS) can come to a meeting you have with your casework officer.

If you are still unhappy, you have a right to appeal to the First Tier Tribunal (SEN and Disability). We will provide details about how to do this.

Even if it is decided that your child doesn't need an assessment, they can still get extra help.

If you are still worried about your child, you should talk to their education setting to find out what can be done to help them. They may consider different arrangements or asking for some extra support from outside.

The education, health and care needs assessment

Very few children/young people need an education, health and care needs assessment. If the SEN panel decide that an assessment is needed, a member of the SEN assessment and review team will contact you to make an appointment for you to meet your casework officer. This meeting will usually take place in your child's setting/school/college.

Your casework officer from the SEN assessment and review team will organise a date for an assessment planning meeting. You know your child best and therefore you are a very important part of this meeting – this is your opportunity to let all the people who support your child know what your worries and concerns are.

During this meeting, you will be asked to sign a consent form that will give us permission to share information between the people who will be involved in the assessment. We will also explain how the assessment process will work, including how long each stage will take, and make a list of the people who are already involved in supporting your child. There will be lots of information given to you at this meeting and it is important that you ask about anything that you don't understand or any questions that you have.

The assessment planning meeting will think about these things for your child:	What people like and admire about them? What is important to and for them? What is working well? What are the issues and questions that need to be addressed?

A member of the SEN assessment and review team will normally be responsible for overseeing this meeting and they will record what everyone says. This information will then be written up and a copy provided to all who attend.

There will not be any repetition or duplication in the assessments for your child.

During the assessment planning, everyone will decide together who will do what and a list will be made of the reports that will be produced during the rest of the assessment. Everyone who will be writing a report has six weeks to do so. As these reports are received by the SEN assessment and review team, a copy will be posted to you so that you can see what is being said about your child in terms of their special educational needs, any health and social care needs and what support should be put in place to help them.

After six weeks, the local authority's SEN panel will consider all of the reports received during the assessment and decide whether or not to issue a draft education, health and care plan for your child.

Not all assessments will result in an education, health and care plan. If your child's needs can be supported using the resources available to their education setting, as outlined in the Local Offer, notes to guide a school on special educational needs planning for your child will be prepared by the local authority. These notes will include a description of your child's special educational needs, as well as the local authority's reasons for not making an education, health and care plan. The notes will also offer guidance to your child's school about the support that should be made for your child from within their own resources.

Whether your child receives an education, health and care plan or summary notes, either document will contain all the information gathered during the assessment.

A member of the SEN assessment and review team will contact you once a decision has been made by the local authority and either an education, health and care plan or summary notes have been drafted.

A timetable for assessment is enclosed with this booklet as Appendix 1.

What is the difference between an education, health and care plan and summary notes of an assessment?

An education, health and care plan is a legal document. This means that the LA must ensure that the support included in it is in place for your child and review it at least once per year. There is a legal duty on education, health and social services to provide the support specified in your child's education, health and care plan.

The summary notes of an assessment are a non-statutory document. This means that the support included in them is not legally enforceable. Whilst your child's education setting may choose to keep it up to date, they do not have to.

Both the education, health and care plan and summary notes will include a

profile of your child, a description of their strengths and needs, information about the support they need to succeed and achieve and a list of the people who support them.

What happens with your child's school?

If your child receives an education, health and care plan, your casework officer will discuss education placement with you.

The local authority will send you a list of the schools that are suitable for children/ young people with special educational needs	The local authority will send you details of the mainstream and special schools in the area. You will also receive a list of all schools known as 'non-maintained' special schools and independent special schools. You have a right to express a preference for any school.

The vast majority of children/young people will attend a mainstream school.

All mainstream schools on the Isle of Wight are able to support children/young people with special educational needs and you can ask to see their policies or local offer information. Some schools also have additionally resourced provision catering for children/young people with particular difficulties and there are two special schools that children/young people with the most severe and complex special educational needs can attend.

Deciding the school you would like your child to attend is an important matter. If you need any help, information or advice about which schools will be able to meet your child's needs, you can contact the SEN assessment and review team or the Parent Partnership service.

You will have 15 calendar days to tell us which school you would like your child to attend. If you need more time than this, or would like to discuss it, you can let us know and we will try to accommodate your request.

We have to consult the school before naming it in your child's education, health

and care plan, but the local authority will make the final decision. You will be fully informed about this and we will explain our decisions to you.

You will receive a final copy of your child's education, health and care plan, containing the name of the school, within 20 weeks of us receiving the assessment request.

What happens if you disagree with the education, health and care plan?

If you disagree with the education support in the plan, you should first contact the SEN assessment and review team to discuss this. Speaking to the Parent Partnership service (SENDIASS) should also be helpful. If you are still not happy, you have a right of appeal to the First Tier Tribunal (SEN and Disability) against the contents of:

- the description of your child's needs;
- the support to be provided for your child;
- the name and the type of school your child should attend.

If you want to appeal to the First Tier Tribunal about the educational parts of your child's plan, you must do so within two months of when the final education, health and care plan was issued.

If you disagree with the health care part of your child's plan, you must do so through directly through the Isle of Wight NHS Healthcare Trust's complaints process. For disagreements about the social care provision in your child's plan, you can make a formal complaint under the Isle of Wight Council's complaints procedure by writing to the director of children's services or the designated complaints officer for the authority.

Reviewing your child's education, health and care plan

The local authority must check your child's progress and make sure the plan continues to meet their special educational needs. This must be done at least once a year for children and young people aged five years and over and six-monthly for those children up to five years of age, but there may be more frequent reviews, depending on your child's needs.

You will be contacted with a date for the review meeting, usually by your child's education setting, inviting you to attend. Before the meeting, you should be asked for your views on your child's progress since the last review.

Remember – your views are very important.

The education setting will also ask for a report from any professionals who have been supporting your child since the last review. Before the meeting, you will receive copies of all the reports that have been written.

During the annual review meeting, your child's progress towards the outcomes set out in their education, health and care plan will be discussed. If they have achieved some, or all, of their outcomes, new goals will be set. If they have not achieved, or are still working towards, their outcomes, the support in place for them will be discussed. Any proposed changes to your child's education, health and care plan will be recorded.

The review meeting will usually be held in your child's nursery, school or college. You can take a family member, friend or an adviser to the meeting to support you if needed. Your child will also be invited to attend some, or all, of the meeting.

After the annual review meeting, the changes that were discussed will be considered by the SEN assessment and review team and, if necessary, changes will be made to your child's education, health and care plan. We will send you an amended plan and ask for your views. You will have 15 calendar days to let us know if you are unhappy with the changes; if we do not hear from you, the amended plan will be finalised.

You have the same rights as when the plan was first finalised, no matter how long ago this was. If you disagree with anything in your child's plan, please contact the SEN assessment and review team. You also have a right of appeal to the First Tier Tribunal (SEN and disability).

How long does an education, health and care plan last?

Your child could have an education, health and care plan for the whole of their education, or just for part of it. The reviews of your child's plan may indicate that they will continue to make good progress with the help that their education provider can put in place from their own resources. In these cases, your child will no longer be considered to need statutory support and the local authority would cease to maintain their education, health and care plan.

As long as a child or young person continues to access statutory special education provision, the education, health and care plan could last until they reach the age of 25.

After the age of 16, an education, health and care plan will stay in place for a young person in most education settings, for example:

- Specialist schools or colleges;
- Mainstream further education and sixth form colleges;
- Training providers.

If a young person decides to move into employment or on to university, an education, health and care plan does not apply because this is not special educational provision, although there should still be support available. Information on support available for young people can be found on the Isle of Wight local offer at www.iwight.com/localoffer

What happens if you move to another area?

If you are going to move, you will need to let us know by contacting the SEN assessment and review team. You will also need to contact the SEN team in the area to which you are moving, to talk to them about your child's needs and the best way of ensuring that they continue to be met.

When you move, we will send your child's education, health and care plan to the SEN team in your new local authority.

What is the Isle of Wight local offer?

The Isle of Wight local offer website is to help parents/carers find support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. All families need extra support from time to time. Whether that support is from family and friends, community groups, services that everybody can use such as schools, children's centres, leisure centres and doctor's surgeries, or more specialist services, all can make a valuable contribution and difference to people's lives. Knowing what is out there gives you more choice and more control over what support is right for your child.

The local offer aims to bring together information that is intended to be helpful to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families.

The local offer has two main purposes:

- To provide clear, comprehensive information, in one place, on the support and opportunities available locally to children, young people and their families and what can be expected from a range of local agencies including education, health and social care.
- To make services more responsive to local needs and shaped by you.

The local offer will provide you with all the information you need to help you identify the right support to enable your child to participate fully in and enjoy learning and achieve their goals.

The local offer will cover:

- education, health and care provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND);
- arrangements for identifying and assessing children and young people with SEND, including arrangements for requesting an education health and care (EHC) needs assessment;
- other education provision (outside of schools or colleges such as sports or arts provision), training provision, including apprenticeships;
- Respite support and leisure activities;
- arrangements for travel to and from schools, post-16 institutions and early years providers;
- support to help children and young people in moving between phases of education and to prepare for adulthood.

The local offer will make it easier for you to find out what you need to do to support your child, making you less reliant on other people or word-of-mouth suggestions. It will explain how different services are accessed, including any eligibility criteria. This will ensure you can see exactly what support is available to you. It will also help parent/carers to feedback and challenge when they are concerned that their son or daughter isn't receiving the right support to meet his/her needs or the provision they had been led to expect is not in place.

The local offer is being developed and written with parents/carers, so hopefully it will be as reliable and beneficial as when other parents tell you useful information and pass on the benefit of their personal experiences and the knowledge that they have gained from being a parent of a child or young person with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The Isle of Wight local offer can be found at: www.iwight.com/localoffer

What help is available for parents?

Parent Partnership, also known as the SEN and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS), provides support and advice to parents whose children/young people have special educational needs and/or disability. They provide accurate and neutral information on the full range of options available to parents. They do not 'take sides'. They help parents to make informed decisions about their child's education. Parent Partnership (SENDIASS) can be contacted on (01983) 825548 or by emailing parentpartnership@iow.gov.uk or visiting their website www.iwpp.co.uk and you can find out more information on the Isle of Wight Council's local offer website.

In addition to the services provided by Parent Partnership (SENDIASS), parents can currently also be supported through the education, health and care needs assessment/transfer process by independent supporters who are managed by People Matter IW. In addition to other things around the SEN reforms, independent supporters are able to provide advice and support to parents/carers and young people to understand the EHCP referral process and to act as a key person/named contact for families through the process. Any parent/carer or young person with a SEND can use this service; they do not need to currently have a statement/EHCP/LDA but should be thinking about starting the process or being transferred to an EHCP.

The independent support team can be contacted by telephone on (01983) 823898 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 2.30pm), by emailing independentsupport@peoplematteriw.org or visiting their website www.peoplematteriw.org/independent-support-service. Their office is opposite County Hall in Newport and they are also able to have meetings at Downside.

Independent support will only be involved during the statutory assessment process for an education health care plan. It is an additional resource to assist families through this time of change. Parent Partnership (SENDIASS) will continue to provide impartial information, advice and support on special educational needs before and after the process and independent support will continue to provide information, advice and signposting.

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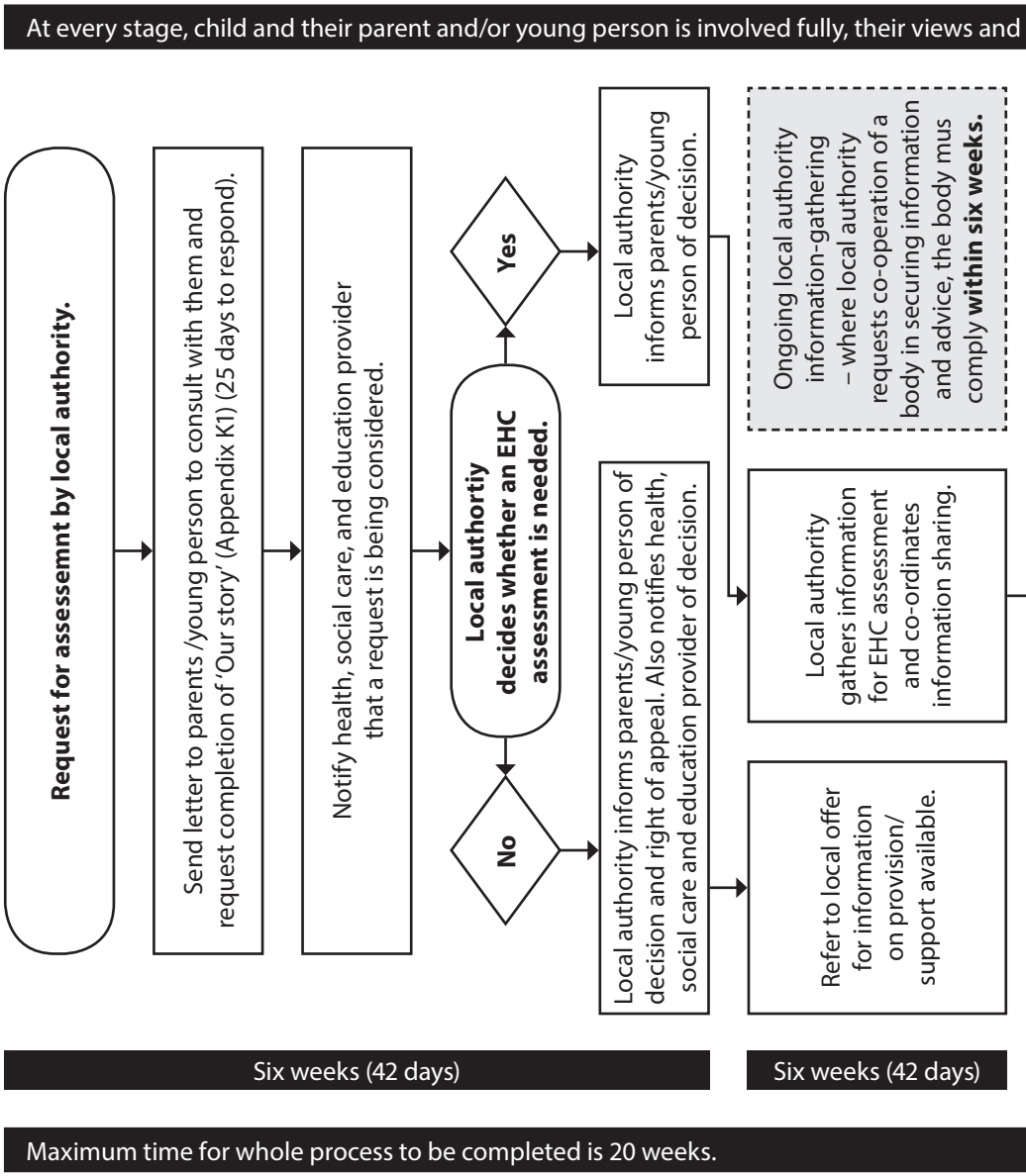
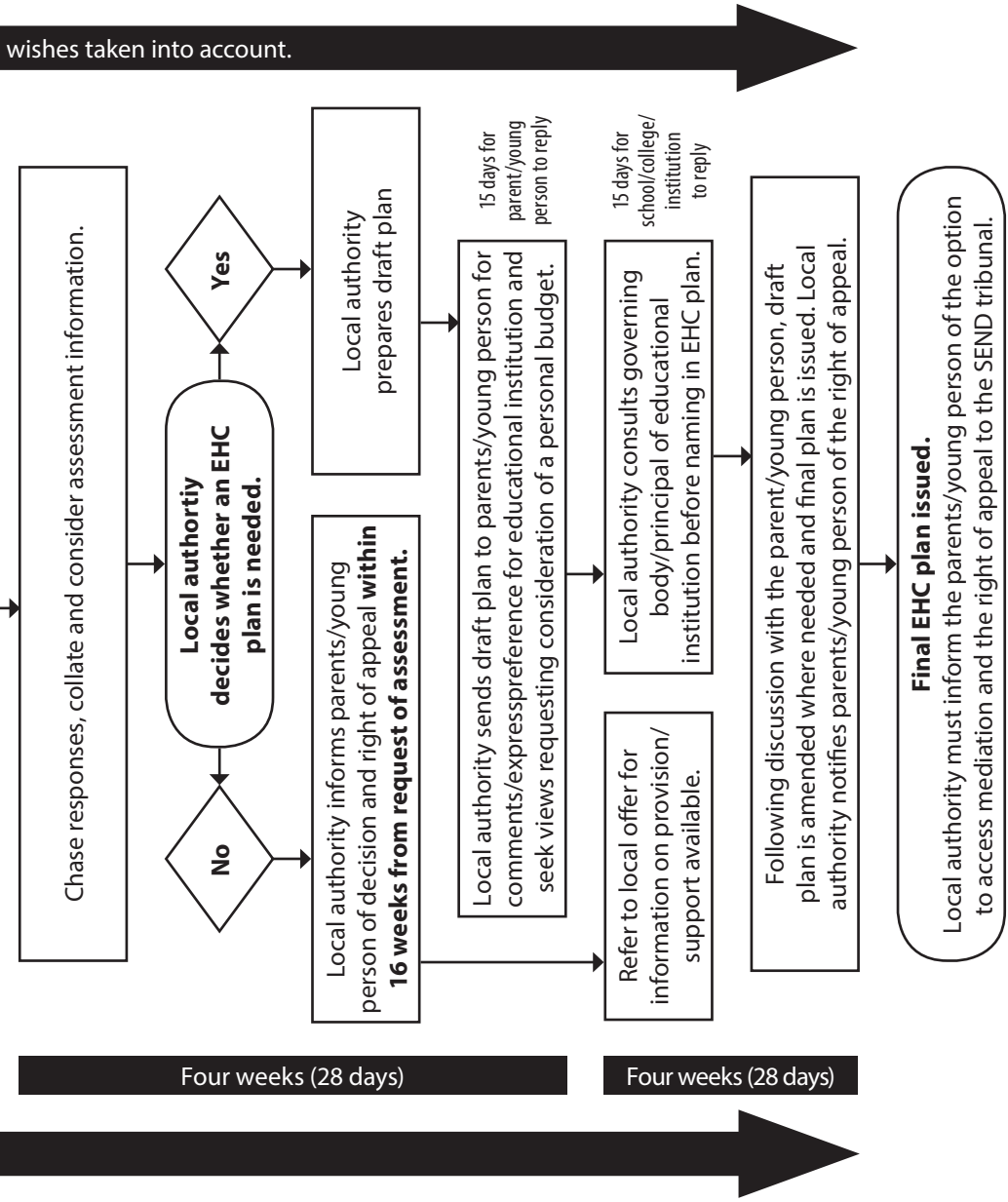
Appendix

EHC assessment and plan – timescale overview for September 2014




wishes taken into account.
Chase responses, collate and consider assessment information.
Local authoriy decides whether an EHC plan is needed.
Yes
No
Local authority prepares draft plan
Local authority informs parents/young person of decision and right of appeal within 16 weeks from request of assessment.
Local authority sends draft plan to parents/young person for comments/expresspreference for educational institution and seek views requesting consideration of a personal budget.
15 days for parent/young person to reply
Refer to local offer for information on provision/ support available.
Local authority consults governing body/principal of educational institution before naming in EHC plan.
15 days for school/college/ institution to reply
Following discussion with the parent/young person, draft plan is amended where needed and final plan is issued. Local authority notifies parents/young person of the right of appeal.
Final EHC plan issued.
Local authority must inform the parents/young person of the option to access mediation and the right of appeal to the SEND tribunal.
Four weeks (28 days)
Four weeks (28 days)

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Notes

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If you have difficulty understanding this document, please contact us on 01983 821000 and we will do our best to help you.

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