

LOOKING GLASS CARE / FREE PRACTICAL GUIDE

Support before and during an EHCP request

Parents, carers and education staff planning SEN support in England.

Practical steps to organise support now, record its impact and decide what further assessment may be needed. This is not a list a family must complete before requesting an EHC needs assessment.



Why this matters to me

From a parent and care-work perspective, I value a plan that tells everyone what will happen next. Families should not be left with only a suggestion to wait, and staff need a clear way to record whether support is helping.

How to use this guide

Read the five short lessons, work through the checklist and use the record sheet to choose your next action. Allow around 25-35 minutes plus time for your own review. Keep personal records securely; use anonymised notes for team learning.

This is general educational information for England, checked against the sources listed at the end. It is not an accredited qualification, clinical assessment or individual legal advice.

Learn and apply

1. Start with the difficulty and the strength

Arrange a conversation with the teacher or SENCO. Describe what the child enjoys, where they succeed and which tasks or parts of the day are difficult. Bring a few dated examples and invite the child's views. Ask how the setting has assessed learning, communication, physical, sensory or emotional needs and whether other advice is required. Support should be based on need; do not assume a diagnosis must come first.

2. Agree a small written support plan

Choose specific adjustments linked to the difficulty. Examples include breaking instructions into steps, accessible learning materials, checking understanding, structured reading support or preparation for transitions. Agree who will provide support, how often and the review date. Ask what staff need to know across lessons or handovers. Avoid promising a particular intervention will suit every child; professional assessment and the child's response should guide the approach.

Learn and apply

3. Use assess, plan, do and review

Assess the starting point, plan the support, put it into practice and review the result with the child and family. Record the support actually delivered, not only the timetable that was intended. Agree what improvement would look like in access to learning, participation or wellbeing. If something did not help, consider whether it was the wrong support, was not delivered consistently or whether further assessment is needed. Keep useful evidence concise and organised.

4. Seek the right advice while support continues

Ask the SENCO about relevant specialist advice and the local authority's Local Offer. Depending on the concern, a GP, health visitor, speech and language service or other professional may be involved. Referral routes and eligibility vary locally. Ask who is referring, what evidence is needed and how acceptance will be confirmed. Schools and families can continue appropriate adjustments while awaiting an assessment; a waiting list should not mean no support.

Learn and apply

5. Know when to consider an EHC assessment

If a child has or may have SEN and it may be necessary for provision to be made through an EHC plan, consider an assessment request under section 36. A diagnosis, school agreement or completion of every possible intervention is not a universal legal prerequisite. Evidence of support and its impact is useful, but this guide must not be used as a barrier to a request. Ask your local SENDIASS for help understanding the process and keep track of decisions and dates.

Check your understanding

Must every intervention be tried and fail before a parent can request an EHC needs assessment?

Suggested answer: No. Useful SEN support and evidence can run alongside a request. Apply the statutory assessment test rather than inventing a fixed sequence that every family must finish.

Practical review checklist

Mark each item: checked / action needed / not applicable. Note the evidence and reason, rather than treating a tick as proof.

- ☐ A teacher or SENCO discussion has a written record.
- ☐ The child's strengths and views are included.
- ☐ Adjustments are linked to specific needs.
- ☐ Frequency, responsibility and review date are agreed.
- ☐ Delivery and impact are recorded separately.
- ☐ Referral responsibility and follow-up are clear.
- ☐ Support continues during waits where appropriate.
- ☐ The EHC assessment threshold is considered without an invented waiting rule.

My next three actions

1. Action: _____

Owner / help needed: _____ Review date: _____

2. Action: _____

Owner / help needed: _____ Review date: _____

3. Action: _____

Owner / help needed: _____ Review date: _____

Your working record

Use a copy for each review, support plan or referral. Keep identifying and sensitive information in your own secure system.

Difficulty and starting point

Child's view and desired change

Support and frequency

Person responsible

Review evidence and result

Next action or assessment question

Sources and next steps

Information checked on 18 September 2026. Guidance and local pathways can change; use these primary sources for current detail.

[GOV.UK, Special educational needs support](#)

[Department for Education and Department of Health \(2015\), SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years](#)

[UK Parliament \(2014\), Children and Families Act, section 36](#)

[GOV.UK, Extra help: education, health and care plans](#)

Choose what helps you next

Explore the matching free mini-course, browse related resources or ask Looking Glass Care about practical support. The guide and mini-course do not include an individual assessment or a regulated qualification.

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