

Understanding the EHCP: A Guide for Parent Carers



What is an EHCP?



An Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is a legally binding document for children and young people aged 0–25 with significant special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

It sets out the child or young person's needs, the support required, and the desired outcomes across education, health, and care.

SECTION A – The Child or Young Person’s Voice



This section captures the views, interests and aspirations of the child or young person (CYP) and their family. There’s no right or wrong way— this is their story.

- Aspirations must come from the CYP themselves
- Covers play, friendships, schooling, independence, health, employment goals
- Describes how they communicate and how to involve them in decisions
- Can include their history and important preferences

If written in the first person, it must be clear if it is the CYP speaking or someone on their behalf.

SECTION B – Special Educational Needs (SEN)



All special educational needs must be clearly listed. This section is legally binding.

Key categories include:

- Communication and Interaction
- Cognition and Learning
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health
- Sensory and/or Physical Needs

From Year 9 onwards, additional categories address preparation for adulthood:

- Education, Employment and Training
- Community Inclusion
- Independent Living
- Health and Wellbeing

SECTION C – Health Needs



Lists any health conditions linked to the CYP's SEND, e.g.:

- Medication
- Speech & language therapy
- Physiotherapy
- Medical appointments

These needs must be supported by professional reports (listed in Section K).

SECTION D – Social Care Needs

Includes support required due to disability or SEND, such as:

- Early Help
- Family support
- Child in Need (CIN) assessments
- Support under Section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970

SECTION E – Outcomes

This section outlines the goals for the child or young person. These should be:

- SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound
- Based on CYP aspirations
- Directly linked to needs in Section B and provision in Section F
- Supportive of progress in education, wellbeing, and independence

SECTION F – Special Educational Provision



This legally binding section details the exact support the CYP must receive to meet the needs outlined in Section B.

Provision must be:

- Specific – Who will deliver it, what, when and how
- Quantified – Frequency, duration, setting
- Needs-led – Not based on available resources

Avoid vague terms like:

“should have”, “regular support”, “access to”,
“will benefit from”.

Health Provision

Details the actual health services or therapy needed to meet Section C needs (e.g. CAMHS support, medication monitoring, equipment).

Social Care Provision

Sets out services the LA must provide, including respite care, personal care, or other support services.

SECTION I – Educational Placement

Parents and young people have the right to request a:

- Maintained school (mainstream or special)
- Academy
- FE college
- Non-maintained special school
- Section 41 school

The LA can only refuse if:

- The setting is unsuitable for the CYP's needs
- It affects the efficient education of others
- It's an inefficient use of resources

SECTION J – Personal Budget

Outlines any personal budget agreed and how it will be used to meet provision (usually in Sections F, G or H). It includes:

- What the budget is for
- How it will be used
- Any direct payments agreed

SECTION K – Index of Reports



All professional advice used to inform the EHCP must be listed here, including:

- Educational Psychologist
- Speech and Language Therapist
- Paediatrician
- School staff
- Social Care and more

You should receive copies with the EHCP draft.

Timelines You Should Know

- 16 weeks: LA must respond to a request for assessment
- 20 weeks: A final EHCP must be issued if agreed

Things to Think About

- Do you and your CYP understand the EHCP?
- Is it easy to read and clearly worded?
- Have all relevant professionals contributed?
- Are outcomes and provisions specific and realistic?
- Is there enough detail to ensure accountability?

In Summary

The EHCP must be:

- Based on accurate needs
- Clear, detailed and legally enforceable
- Centred on the voice and aspirations of the child or young person
- A true roadmap to help them achieve their potential in education and beyond