

Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment Timeline

Key Timings Summary Table

This table provides a clear overview of the key stages and timings involved in the Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) process.

Stage	Action	Timing
Request Made	Parent, school or professional submits EHCNA request to local authority.	Day 0
Initial Decision	Local authority decides whether to proceed with assessment.	Within 6 weeks
Assessment Phase	Gathering information from professionals, parents, and young person.	Weeks 6–16
Draft Plan Issued	Local authority issues draft Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) if assessment warrants it.	By week 16
Consultations	Parents review draft, express preferences, and consult with schools.	Weeks 16–20
Final EHCP Issued	Local authority issues final EHCP.	By week 20

What the Local Authority must do at each stage (including partnership working and co-production)

Across the whole Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) process, the local authority (LA) should work in partnership with families, children and young people, education settings and relevant health and social care professionals. This includes co-producing key decisions and documents wherever possible (for example, agreeing the outcomes to be pursued and how support will be delivered), communicating clearly and accessibly, and making it easy for families to contribute their views and evidence.

Stage 1: Request made (Day 0)

- Acknowledge receipt promptly and explain the process, timescales, and what happens next in plain language.

- Check that the request includes the child/young person's details and the reasons for requesting an assessment; support the referrer/family to provide any missing information without creating unnecessary barriers.
- Ensure families know how they will be involved from the start (for example, how to share views, preferred communication methods, and who their named contact is).
- Begin early partnership conversations with the education setting and relevant services so information gathering can start quickly if an assessment is agreed.

Stage 2: Initial decision (within 6 weeks)

- Consider all available evidence, including the views of the child/young person and parent/carer, and information from the education setting and professionals.
- Work with the family and setting to clarify strengths, needs, and what support has already been tried (and its impact), to inform a timely and fair decision.

YES to assess:

- Notify the family of the decision within the statutory timescale, explaining reasons clearly and setting out next steps.

NO to assess:

- Where the decision is not to assess, the LA must provide the decision in writing and letter must include details about how to appeal, including formal mediation. They must also signpost to organisations, who can support with next steps.

Stage 3: Assessment phase (Weeks 6–16)

- Coordinate advice and information from education, health and social care (and any other relevant professionals), ensuring requests are made early enough to meet the overall 20-week timescale.
- Enable meaningful participation by the child/young person and family (for example, offering meetings, using accessible formats,

and capturing “what matters to me” alongside professional reports).

- Facilitate partnership working between practitioners so the assessment is joined-up rather than a set of separate reports (for example, shared understanding of needs and agreed outcomes across services).
- Identify and resolve gaps or inconsistencies in advice, and keep the family updated on progress, including any risks to timescales and how these will be addressed.
- Use a strengths-based approach and focus on outcomes, agreeing with the family what good progress looks like and how it will be measured.

Stage 4: Decision whether to issue an EHCP (by Week 16)

YES to issue an EHCP:

- If the assessment indicates an EHCP is needed, prepare and issue a draft plan that reflects the evidence and is written clearly (needs, outcomes and provision should link and be specific).
- Co-produce the draft with the child/young person and family as far as possible—checking that their views and aspirations are accurately represented and that outcomes are meaningful and achievable.
- Ensure education, health and social care contributions are properly integrated so responsibilities are transparent and provision is not duplicated or missing.
- Explain the draft stage, including how to request changes, how to express a placement preference, and the timescales for responses.

NO to issuing an EHCP:

- If no EHCP is to be issued, the LA must provide the decision in writing and letter must include details about how to appeal, including formal mediation. They must also signpost to organisations, who can support with next steps.

Stage 5: Consultations (Weeks 16–20)

- Consult with the family and the child/young person on the draft content, actively seeking their feedback and discussing proposed amendments. Parent carers can request a specific school, to be named in Section I.
- Consult with education settings (and, where relevant, other providers) about placement, including parental preference and the ability to meet need, ensuring the consultation process is timely and evidence-informed.
- Work in partnership to resolve disagreements, using transparent reasoning and problem-solving approaches (for example, joint meetings or multi-agency discussions) wherever appropriate.
- Ensure any agreed changes are reflected consistently across the plan (needs, outcomes and provision) and that responsibilities for delivery are clear.

Stage 6: Final EHCP issued (by Week 20)

- Issue the final EHCP within the statutory timeframe, ensuring it is accurate, specific and consistent with the evidence gathered.
- Provide the family with the final plan and clearly explain next steps, including start dates for provision, how placement will be arranged, and the family's rights (including mediation and appeal routes, where relevant).
- Confirm arrangements for implementation in partnership with the education setting and relevant services so support begins without avoidable delay.
- Maintain a co-produced approach going forward, including planning for reviews and ensuring the child/young person and family remain at the centre of decision-making.

If parent carer or young person disagree with content ie. needs Section B and/or provision Section F and/or placement Section I placement, right of appeal begins.

Total process duration from request to final EHCP: up to 20 weeks.