



Hints & Tips for Parent Carers Attending a SEND Tribunal

These are designed to help parents feel more confident and prepared.

1. Remember the tribunal is independent

The tribunal panel is independent of the council. Their job is to make a fair decision based on the law and evidence. The panel usually includes:

A judge

A specialist member with education experience

Sometimes a disability specialist

They want to understand your child's needs and what provision is required.

2. Focus on needs and provision

When answering questions, try to keep coming back to:

Your child's needs

What support they require

Why the current plan or decision does not meet those needs

Avoid focusing on disagreements with the school or local authority unless it directly relates to unmet needs.

3. Use real examples

Panels find real-life examples very helpful. For example:

What happens during a school day

What happens when support is not in place

How your child struggles at home after school

Examples help explain the impact of your child's needs.

4. You do not need to know the law

You are not expected to be a lawyer. The tribunal understands that parent carers are experts in their child.

If something isn't clear, you can ask the judge to explain.

5. Take notes and bring a list

It can help to bring:

A short list of key points you want to say

Page numbers from important evidence

Notes about your child's difficulties

You can refer to these during the hearing.

6. Be honest about your child's needs

Parents sometimes minimise difficulties. The tribunal needs to hear the full reality of your child's needs, even if it feels uncomfortable.

7. It is okay to take your time

You can:

Pause before answering

Ask for a question to be repeated

Take a short break if needed

Tribunals are used to working with families and will try to make the process manageable.

8. Stick to evidence where possible

Helpful evidence can include:

School reports

Professional assessments

Emails or records of support not being delivered

Your own written parental views

9. Remember you are the expert in your child

Professionals may discuss assessments and reports, but you know how your child functions day to day. Your voice is important.

10. It is okay to feel nervous

Most parent carers feel anxious before a hearing. The panel understands this and will try to put you at ease.

SEND ASSIST

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Review: March 27