

Education Health Care Assessments (ECHA)



Exploding the myths

We have worked with the Local Authority, SENDIASS, schools and professionals to co-produce the latest advice and guidance document: <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/local-offer/education-health-and-care-plan-ehcp>. We debated wording, approaches, and evidence until we got the best possible document – one that is clear to read by all and sets out what information those making an assessment might find useful.

There were some significant changes that we feel are improvements:

- It is no longer a 'threshold' document.
- It does not refer to a percentage of population that this may apply to - there are no numbers to be reached or avoided.
- It sets out the evidence which might be useful to gather – it is not a check list but is there to be clear about the sorts of evidence that the assessing professionals would find helpful for them to make the decisions that a full assessment is appropriate.
- It helps remind schools what they are expected to be doing as part of their graduated approach to supporting children with SEND.
- It recognises cumulative needs.
- It does not set our academic delay as the overriding factor – i.e. you must be x number of years behind. [this is one of the most unhelpful myths].
- It makes it clear it will accept assessments from suitably qualified professionals – you can use private assessments if you wish. However, the Local Authority will always use their own Educational Psychologist, or one commissioned by them, to undertake an assessment as part of an EHCNA.
- It reminds every school that early assessments are desirable and can be done using school resources or the free resources the SEND District Team have in their lending library.
- It does expect there to have been some attempts to address needs, as per the Code of Practice 2015 (through Assess Plan Do Review). It does not expect that there will be years of APDR with no or little progress. It also expects interventions to match the needs of the child and to be effective. What they want to see is the detail of what was done and what happened.

The document makes it clear that how much support has been needed to achieve progress is an important factor. The document makes it clear that the assessing professionals do not want inches of paper – they need a clear summary of needs and evidence that helps decide to assess. Importantly, it reminds you from the outset of the document that an Education Health Care

Assessment may be appropriate where:

- the child or young person has or may have special educational needs, and
- it may be necessary for special educational provision to be made for the child or young person in accordance with an EHC plan."

This is set down in legislation. A parent or professional can make a request to assess.