

■ The Parent Tree

SEND Jargon Buster

Plain-English definitions for every term you'll hear in SEND meetings

SEND meetings come with their own language. Knowing what the terms mean helps you follow the conversation, ask better questions, and make sure your child's needs are properly understood. Keep this guide with you — and share it with any SEND parent who needs it.

The Key Documents

EHCP <i>Education, Health and Care Plan</i>	The legal document that describes your child's needs and the support they must receive. Schools, Local Authorities and health services all contribute to it. It is legally binding.
EHC Needs Assessment	The process of gathering information to decide whether your child needs an EHCP. You or the school can request one. The LA has 20 weeks to complete the full process from request to issuing a final plan.
SEN Support	The level of support given to children with SEND who do not yet have an EHCP. Schools fund and arrange this themselves using their own resources.
Annual Review	A yearly meeting to check that your child's EHCP still reflects their needs and the support is working. You must be invited and your views must be recorded.
Draft Plan	A version of the EHCP sent to you before it is finalised. You have 15 days to respond with any changes or objections. Always read it carefully.

The People in the Room

SENCo <i>Special Educational Needs Coordinator</i>	The member of school staff responsible for coordinating SEND support. Every school must have one. They are your main point of contact for your child's needs in school.
LA <i>Local Authority</i>	Your local council. They hold the legal responsibility for issuing and maintaining EHCPs. They make the final decisions about what support goes into the plan.
EP <i>Educational Psychologist</i>	A professional who assesses how a child learns, thinks and behaves. Their report is often crucial in EHCP assessments and reviews.
SALT / SLT <i>Speech and Language Therapist</i>	A professional who supports children with communication, speech, language and eating or swallowing difficulties. Often involved in EHCP assessments.

OT <i>Occupational Therapist</i>	Supports children with physical, sensory or developmental needs that affect daily activities — including handwriting, self-care and sensory processing.
TAC <i>Team Around the Child</i>	A group of professionals and family members who work together to support a child. May be used before or alongside the EHCP process.
SENDIASS <i>Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service</i>	A free, impartial service that gives advice and support to parents of children with SEND. Independent of the LA. Very useful if you are in dispute.

The Sections of an EHCP

Section A <i>Your Child's Views, Interests and Aspirations</i>	What your child says about their life, hopes and experiences. Often captured through a child-friendly conversation or questionnaire.
Section B <i>Your Child's Needs</i>	A description of your child's special educational needs. This sets the foundation for everything else in the plan.
Section C & D <i>Health and Social Care Needs</i>	Details of any health (C) or social care (D) needs. These inform the plan but the legally binding educational support is in Section F.
Section E <i>Outcomes</i>	What the plan aims to help your child achieve, typically over 12 months. Outcomes should be specific and measurable — not vague.
Section F <i>Educational Provision</i>	■■ The most important section. Lists the support your child MUST receive. Language must be specific — "daily 1:1 support for 30 minutes" not "some support as appropriate."
Section I <i>School or Setting</i>	Names the school or provision your child will attend. If you want a specific school named here, you can request it and the LA must consider it.

Your Rights & The Process

15-Week Rule <i>15-Week Deadline</i>	After requesting an EHC Needs Assessment, the LA has 6 weeks to decide whether to assess. If they agree, the full process must be completed within 20 weeks.
Mediation	A formal process to try to resolve disagreements with the LA before going to Tribunal. In most cases you must contact a mediator before you can appeal.
SEND Tribunal <i>First-tier Tribunal (SEND)</i>	An independent body that hears appeals from parents who disagree with LA decisions about EHCPs. Free to use. You do not need a lawyer, but support helps.
Personal Budget	Money allocated for your child's EHCP support that you may have some control over — for example, choosing who provides certain services.

Working Document

A term sometimes used for an EHCP that is being reviewed or updated. Not an official term — always ask for clarity on which version you are looking at.

Common Abbreviations

SEND

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

SEN

Special Educational Needs

ASD / ASC

Autism Spectrum Disorder / Condition

ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

DLD

Developmental Language Disorder

PDA

*Pathological Demand Avoidance
(or Pervasive Drive for
Autonomy)*

EAL

English as an Additional Language

SEMH

Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs

CYP

Children and Young People

TAF

Team Around the Family

Ready to go further?

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