



One minute guide

Children and Families Act (2014) - Special Educational Needs and Disability services (SEND)

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What is the Children and Families Act 2014?

The [Children and Families Act 2014](#) brought together changes to legislation around services for vulnerable children, young people and families. The provisions in the Act which relate to special educational needs and disability (SEND) came into force in September 2014.

What changes did the Act make in relation to SEND?

The Act requires education, health and social care agencies to work together more closely than they have in the past. This includes integrated practices in identification and assessment, and integrated planning to meet needs. It also includes joint commissioning of services for children and young people with SEND and their families.

The Act replaced the former statutory assessment process with the Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment. It replaced previous statutory plans with the [Education, Health and Care Plan \(EHC Plan\)](#). Practitioners from different services contribute to a single assessment of needs and a single plan.

The Act also legislates increased personalisation of services, including [personal budgets](#). Personal budgets are available to families whose child has an EHC Plan with funding; personal budgets can give more control over how specific funding to meet their child's needs is spent.

The Act also introduced a requirement for every local authority to publish a [Local Offer website](#).

How does the Local Offer introduced by the Act Work?

The Leeds Local Offer brings together information about all services for children and young people with SEND aged 0-25 and their families, including education, health, social care, transport, childcare and leisure services. It also provides information about identification, funding and assessment of SEND needs. Education, health and social care agencies have a duty to ensure accessible information for children and young people with SEND and their families is available through the Local Offer.

The Local Offer also provides a place for families to give feedback on the offer of services across the city. This feedback must be used by the local authority and health agencies to inform commissioning and service developments. Details of this must be published at least annually, to show families how their input has influenced change.

The Leeds Local Offer can be found here: www.leedslocaloffer.org.uk

How do the EHC Plans introduced by the Act work?

Integrated assessment and care planning through the EHC Needs Assessment for those with the most complex needs has a focus on outcomes and on preparation for adult life. The assessment aims to provide a transparent, person-centred approach and give families input into decision-making. The EHC Needs assessment must be completed within 20 weeks of the date of request.

EHC plans may be maintained for young people up to the age of 25, as long as they remain in some types of education.

How do the Personal Budgets introduced alongside the EHC Plans work?

The term personal budget, in this context, refers to the funding made available to meet the needs of the child or young person, as identified in their EHC Plan.

Education, health and care funding is available without an EHC plan and is expected to be in place before an EHC needs assessment. This funding may come from the local authority and/ or from health agencies. There is no additional funding available with an EHC plan.

The Children and Families Act introduced personal budgets so that children and young people with SEND who have an EHC Plan, and/ or their families, have more choice and control in determining how some funding set out in the EHC Plan is spent. Young people and/ or families may choose to:

- Indicate how they would like the money to be spent, and ask services to continue to manage the spending on their behalf (notional budgets);
- Have the funding paid directly into a separate bank account, to manage and administer themselves (direct payments);
- Nominate somebody else to manage and administer the funding for them (third party); or
- Choose a combination of any of the above options.

Where can I find further information?

There is more information available at the Leeds local offer site:

www.leedslocaloffer.org.uk