



One minute guide

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

No. 61, March 2016

What is the Children and Families Act (2014)?

The [Children and Families Act](#) brings together a number of changes to legislation around services for vulnerable children and families. The changes cover the family justice system, virtual schools for looked after children, adoption, childcare, shared parental leave and flexible working, and Special Educational Needs and disability (SEND) services.

The provisions in the Act which relate to SEND came into force in September 2014.

What changes does the Act make in relation to SEND?

The Act requires education, health and social care agencies to work more closely together. This includes joint commissioning of services for children and young people with SEND and their families.

It also includes a more integrated approach to assessment and care planning for those with the most complex needs. Statements of SEN and Learning Difficulty assessments will be replaced from 1st September with integrated **Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)**, bringing together practitioners from different agencies to contribute to a single assessment and plan.

The Act also increases personalisation of services and introduces **personal budgets** for EHCPs, allowing families more choice and control over how funding to meet their children's needs is spent.

The Act aims to improve information about services for families through publication of the **Local Offer**. This brings together information about all services for those aged 0-25 with SEND in the area. It also provides a forum for families to give feedback on services and influence service developments.

How does the Leeds Local Offer work?

The Leeds [Local Offer](#) brings together information about all services for children and young people aged 0-25, including education, health, social care, transport, childcare and leisure services. Information is available online, or printed information can be accessed through a telephone service.

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

The Leeds Local Offer was published in September 2014, and will continue to be developed over time based on users' feedback.

What are the implications of the new EHC Plans?

Integrated Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessments and plans replace the statutory assessment process and Statements of SEN from September 2014. They also replace post-16 Learning Difficulty Assessments.

The new integrated approach aims to reduce duplication and minimise the need for multiple separate single-agency assessments and care plans. It also aims to give families more input into decision making and to make systems more transparent and person-centred.

EHC plans have more of a focus on outcomes, and on preparation for adult life, than the previous Statements. They can also be available for young people up to the age of 25 in education; the previous age limit was 19 years. The new plans will also be produced more quickly, within 20 weeks rather than the 26 weeks for Statements.

From September 2014, all new requests for assessment will follow the new integrated EHC process, and all existing Statements of SEN will be converted to EHC plans over a three year period. EHC plans will be reviewed annually, as were Statements.

What do personal budgets mean for EHC plans?

Personal budgets refers to the additional funding available to meet the needs of the child or young person and achieve the outcomes identified in their EHC plan.

The Act allows children, young people and families more choice about how this money is spent. There are four options that may be available for families, who can:

- Indicate how they would like the money to be spent, and ask services to continue to do so on their behalf (**notional budgets**);

- Have the funding paid directly into their bank accounts, to manage and administer themselves (**direct payments**);

- Nominate somebody else to manage and administer the funding for them (**third party**);

- Choose a combination of any of the above options.

Families will be able to access advice and support to help them consider which personal budget option is right for them.

Where can I find further information?

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

www.leedslocaloffer.org.uk

In addition, you can read the Children and Families Act [blog](#), which describes the changes, and watch the [film](#) made by young people in Leeds about how services have worked together to implement them.

If you have any questions about the Act or its implementation in relation to SEND, please contact the Best Practice Development Team via bpteam@leeds.gov.uk.