

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS TO CHANGES TO THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS SYSTEM

What is happening?

The Government has introduced a new approach to the way children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families are supported. The changes will come into place from 1st September 2014.

The changes are intended to:

- Raise the aspirations and improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEN and disabilities;
- Give children, young people and their families a greater say over what support and services are available to them;
- Introduce a Local Offer so that parents and carers and children and young people know what support and resources are available to them in Bury and how they can access these. This is across education, health and social care;
- Ensure that education, health and social care professionals work together to support children and young people and their families;
- Introduce an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan to replace the statement of SEN. The plan is focused on the outcomes your child/young person should be able to achieve;
- Have a simpler and more timely assessment process across education, health and care involving children, young people and their families throughout;
- Ensure there is better planning and preparation for young people moving into adulthood. The EHC plan can be in place up to 25 if the young person continues to need a plan to achieve their educational or training outcomes.

What is an Education, Health and Care Plan?

An Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan is designed to coordinate all the additional support that your child or young person needs to reach the educational outcomes that are described in the EHC Plan. The EHC Plan will replace the statement of Special Educational Needs and the Learning Disability Assessment (LDA) although this will not happen immediately and will be phased over the next 3½ years.

What is different about an Education, Health and Care Plan?

An EHC Plan can consider a child's or young person's needs across education, health and care. It puts the child/young person and their family at the centre of the process. It should coordinate the support that is needed to meet the special educational needs and achieve the outcomes that have been identified and are in the EHC plan. A key part of the plan is making sure that the families and the child's/young person's hopes and aspirations for their future are at the centre of the plan. The provision that the child/young person needs can then be shaped to help them to achieve their outcomes.

The EHC Plan has the same statutory protection as a statement and for a small number of children and young people it could be in place from 0-25. It also coordinates the provision for those children and young people who have health and social care needs as well as SEN.

The EHC Plan also gives parents the option of requesting some aspects of support for their child/young person as a personal budget.

What will happen if my child already has a statement?

In Bury over 1,400 children and young people already have a statement of SEN. The Government has decided that from September 2014 to April 2018, all Local Authorities will have to convert the statement of SEN into an EHC Plan. In Bury we intend to convert statements at key points of transition for example when your child goes from nursery into school, in year 5 ready for transfer to high school and in year 11 and 13, when young people are transferring from school into college. **You do not need to do anything at this point as we will write to you in the year your child's or young person's statement is to be converted into an EHC plan to explain how this process will work.**

At the point where we are converting the statement you and your child will be central to the process in developing the EHC plan and agreeing appropriate outcomes.

Until the statement is converted into an EHC plan, all the review processes you are used to will still remain in place. All the same statutory protections for the statement remain in place. When the statement is converted the EHC plan has the same statutory protections as the statement has now.

What if my child does not have a statement of SEN, who is an EHC Plan for?

The EHC plan is for children and young people (0-25) who are in education or training and have special educational needs or a disability and who need additional special educational provision over and above what is available in their educational setting.

If your child may need an assessment for an EHC plan then you will have already been involved with plan, do and review cycles that will have sought to meet your child's/young person's needs. If progress is not made then the next stage may be a request for an EHC assessment. If you are worried about your child and their progress you should speak to your child's or young person's educational setting about their progress and about eligibility for an assessment.

Who can ask for an EHC assessment?

From 1st September 2014 a person acting on behalf of a school or a post-16 institution, or a parent, or a young person (16-25) can ask the Local Authority to carry an EHC assessment. Other people such as a social worker, early year's practitioners, and youth offending teams can also bring a child or young person who has or may have SEN to the attention of the Local Authority. The request will be considered by the Local Authority against the thresholds that are published for an EHC Plan.

Parents can also request an EHC assessment by writing to the SEN team at the Seedfield Site, Parkinson Street, Bury BL9 6NY. Further advice about this process will be given if you ring 0161 253 5642.

What will happen if a request for an EHC Assessment is made?

If a request is made then the Local Authority will let you know that a request has been received and you will be asked whether there is any more information that you would like the Multi-Agency Panel to consider. The information submitted and any more that is gathered will be considered by a Multi-Agency Panel. The Panel will consider the request against the thresholds for an assessment and will decide whether an EHC assessment should be carried out. You will be informed within 6 weeks of the request being made whether the assessment is going ahead. If the assessment is not agreed you will be told why not and about how you can make further representations, seek disagreement resolution and/or mediation and your

right to appeal.

How will we be involved during the EHC Assessment Process?

The new EHC assessment process puts your child/young person and their family at the very centre of the assessment and planning process. This means that you and your child's/young person's views are not only heard, but understood.

If the assessment is agreed then there will be a coordinated assessment process where the information about your child's/young person's needs will be collected together. Then a multi-agency planning meeting with you and your child/young person will decide on what the key outcomes are and how everyone working together can help achieve them. These will then be written into the EHC plan and you will be asked if you agree with it. The whole process will take 20 weeks and at the end of this the plan will remain in place until your child or young person has met their desired outcomes and they no longer need the plan. The plan will be reviewed every year with your child/young person and your family at the heart of this process.

There is a separate leaflet on the website explaining how the EHC assessment process works.

What is the Local Offer?

As part of these reforms all Local Authorities must develop a 'Local Offer' for children and young people with SEND and their families. The Local Offer is designed to give you clear, comprehensive and accessible information about the support and opportunities that are available for all children and young people with SEND whether or not they have an EHC plan. The Local Offer includes information about the services in Bury across leisure, education, social care and health. It also tells you whether you are eligible for the service, any costs and how you can access them.

Schools and colleges will also be expected to publish information about how they support children and young people with SEND and you will find this information on their websites.

We are involving children, young people, families and service providers in the development and review of the Local Offer and all feedback is welcomed.

Introducing Personal Budgets.

If your child/young person is having an EHC assessment then you may be able to request that certain aspects of the plan are delivered through a personal budget.

However this has to be in agreement with the Local Authority, the Health Service and the educational setting and has to be focused on securing the outcomes agreed in the EHC Plan. Any request from a parent would be considered as part of the EHC planning and assessment process. You will be given more information about how this works during the 20 weeks of the assessment.

Where can I get more help and information?

Useful contacts:

Your child's/young person's educational setting.

Bury SEND Information Advice Support Service (IASS) formerly known as Bury Parent Partnership Service

This is an impartial, confidential and free service which can help you through the SEND system. It has independent supporters who can visit you at home, give information by phone or support you in meetings. You can contact the Service at:

The Re:d Centre, Morley St, Bury BL9 9JQ

Tel: 0161 761 0401

E-mail: buryparentpartnership@togethertrust.org.uk

Bury Parents Forum

The Forum is run by Bury parents for parents and can offer a range of support and advice. The Forum can be contacted at:

Phoenix House, 100 Brierley Street, Bury BL9 9HN

Tel: 0161 762 1444

buryparentsforum.org.uk

The SEN Team

The Team is responsible for the maintenance and review of statements of SEN for children and young people who live in Bury. In September 2014 it will be the facilitating the carrying out of assessments for an EHC Plan. The Team can be contacted at:

SEN Team, Children Young People and Culture, Seedfield Site, Parkinson Street, Bury BL9 6NY

Tel: 0161 253 5969

E-mail: senteam@bury.gov.uk