

Introduction and Overview

What are special educational needs?	1
What is a statutory assessment?	1
What is a statement of special educational needs?	1
The SEN Assessment & Commissioning Team (SENACT)	2
Requesting a statutory assessment	2
What happens next?	2
Who makes the decision?	3
Timescales for statutory assessment	5
Information, advice and guidance	6
What if I am not happy with the process?	6
Further information	6

What are special educational needs (SEN)?

If your child has special educational needs, it means something is affecting their ability to make progress with their learning. It does not necessarily mean that your child has a disability or that the problem is long term.

Special educational needs can arise for a number of reasons. In some cases this may be a temporary difficulty that can be overcome with the assistance of you, the school and other support agencies. For others, there may be long-term special educational needs.

What is a statutory assessment?

A statutory assessment is a detailed investigation conducted by the local authority to find out what your child's special educational needs are and what extra help your child may need.

What is a statement of special educational needs?

A statement is a document which states what your child's special educational needs are and how they can be supported in school, as well as other arrangements to support your child. It is produced using information gathered from all people involved in the education of your child. These people could include:

- you
- your child (if appropriate)
- school or early years' setting
- Educational Psychology Service
- other educational support services

- medical/health services
- Social Care
- other agencies working with your child.

The provision set out within a statement will be met through existing resources within the school, additional resources provided from the local authority and specialist support from outside agencies, via the SEN Assessment & Commissioning Team. Your Casework Officer can provide further information about resources available to meet the needs of children and young people with SEN.

The SEN Assessment & Commissioning Team (SENACT)

The Special Educational Needs (SEN) Assessment & Commissioning Team is part of the Specialist Learning & Support Service, within the Directorate for Children & Young People. This team is responsible for coordinating the statutory assessment process. All requests for statutory assessment are received by this team.

You are welcome to contact the team at any time during the process if you have any questions or concerns.

The team can be contacted at:

SEN Assessment & Commissioning Team
Ground Floor, Civic Centre 1 (middle entrance)
High Street
Huddersfield
HD1 2NF

Email: SENACT@kirklees.gov.uk
01484 221317 – South Kirklees
01484 221474 – North Kirklees

Requesting a statutory assessment

A statutory assessment can be requested by your child's school or early years setting. You can also make a request for statutory assessment by contacting the SEN Assessment & Commissioning Team. The request for a statutory assessment does not mean that your child will get a statement, the local authority will make a decision as to whether to assess or whether the child's needs should continue to be met within your child's current school/early years setting.

All requests for a statutory assessment are allocated a named Casework Officer.

What happens next?

All requests, irrespective of how they are made, follow the same process.

The process will be led by your allocated SEN Casework Officer who will coordinate the information from all involved. Details of this information gathering are provided below:

Information for and from parents:

Your Casework Officer will contact you following a request to arrange an opportunity to meet and talk to you in more detail about the process and what happens next.

As a parent, your input into this process is valuable to ensure we gain a clear understanding of your child's needs. At key stages within the process you will be asked to provide information and feedback about your child, their needs and the statutory assessment process. This will be discussed in more detail by your Casework Officer.

Information from professionals:

Information will be gathered and considered by the local authority, this may include:

- The information given by you, your child's school/early years setting, and other professionals involved with your child, about your child's learning difficulties. This information will help the local authority to understand the nature and severity of your child's special educational needs.
- The information given by your child's school/early years setting about any extra help they have given your child at school action plus or early years action plus, and the support they have received from other services, for example an Educational Psychologist, Speech and Language Therapist etc. Your child's school will tell the local authority about any progress your child may have made with this extra help.
- The information given by you, the school/early years setting and the other professionals will help the local authority to decide if your child is likely to need more help than the school/early years setting would normally be expected to provide through the resources normally available to a mainstream school/setting. Your Casework Officer has a booklet which tells you more about what Kirklees schools are expected to provide from their own resources. They can give you a copy of this booklet if you wish.

Your Casework Officer will write to you within six weeks to let you know if it has been decided to carry out a statutory assessment.

Who makes the decision?

The written information gathered is then considered by the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Panel as to whether to undertake a statutory assessment. These meetings are held twice per month, members of the panel include:

- SEN Manager (who normally chairs the meeting)
- Casework Officer from the SEN Assessment & Commissioning Team
- two headteachers representing mainstream and special schools (but not the ones from your child's school).

- Senior Educational Psychologist
- representatives from health and social care.

The SEN Panel is in place to ensure all decisions are made using the same process, and to make sure that it is fair for everyone in Kirklees. The different professionals at the meeting act as support to the local authority designated officer (SEN Manager) in making decisions.

Decisions NOT to undertake a statutory assessment

If a decision is made **not** to undertake a statutory assessment for your child, this does not mean your child will not get support to meet their educational needs. There can be many reasons for deciding not to do a statutory assessment for your child, these might include:

- The local authority has not received the right information to enable a decision to be made. If this is the case then details about what is missing will be in the letter to you and to the school. This missing information can be submitted to support the Panel in reconsidering their decision.
- It is considered that your child's needs should continue to be met through continued assessment and help at School/Early Years Action Plus. This is because schools already have additional funding that has been given to them by the local authority to help them to provide support for children at School/Early Years Action and School/Early Years Action Plus. This enables schools to help pupils with special educational needs to make progress, reducing the need for formal assessment. Your Casework Officer has a booklet which tells you more about what Kirklees schools are expected to provide from their own resources. They can give you a copy of this booklet if you wish.

The panel remains open to all cases where there has been a decision not to assess, new requests can be submitted if your child's needs change or if there is new information in terms of your child's needs, their progress and the level of support required to meet their needs.

Your Casework Officer will send you a letter which will give you the reasons why the decision has been made and suggest what happens next, including ways that your child's school/early years setting can support your child. If you would like to discuss the decision further your Casework Officer is available to speak with you either over the telephone or will meet with you.

Decisions TO undertake a statutory assessment

If a decision is made **to** undertake a statutory assessment for your child the information will be gathered from any relevant professionals involved with your child's education, this will inform the content of the statement. The main professionals that we consult with are medical, psychological and social care, if you would like to consult any other professional please let me know as soon as possible, you may also provide any private

advice or opinions. You should know that any information provided will be sent to the professionals involved in the assessment.

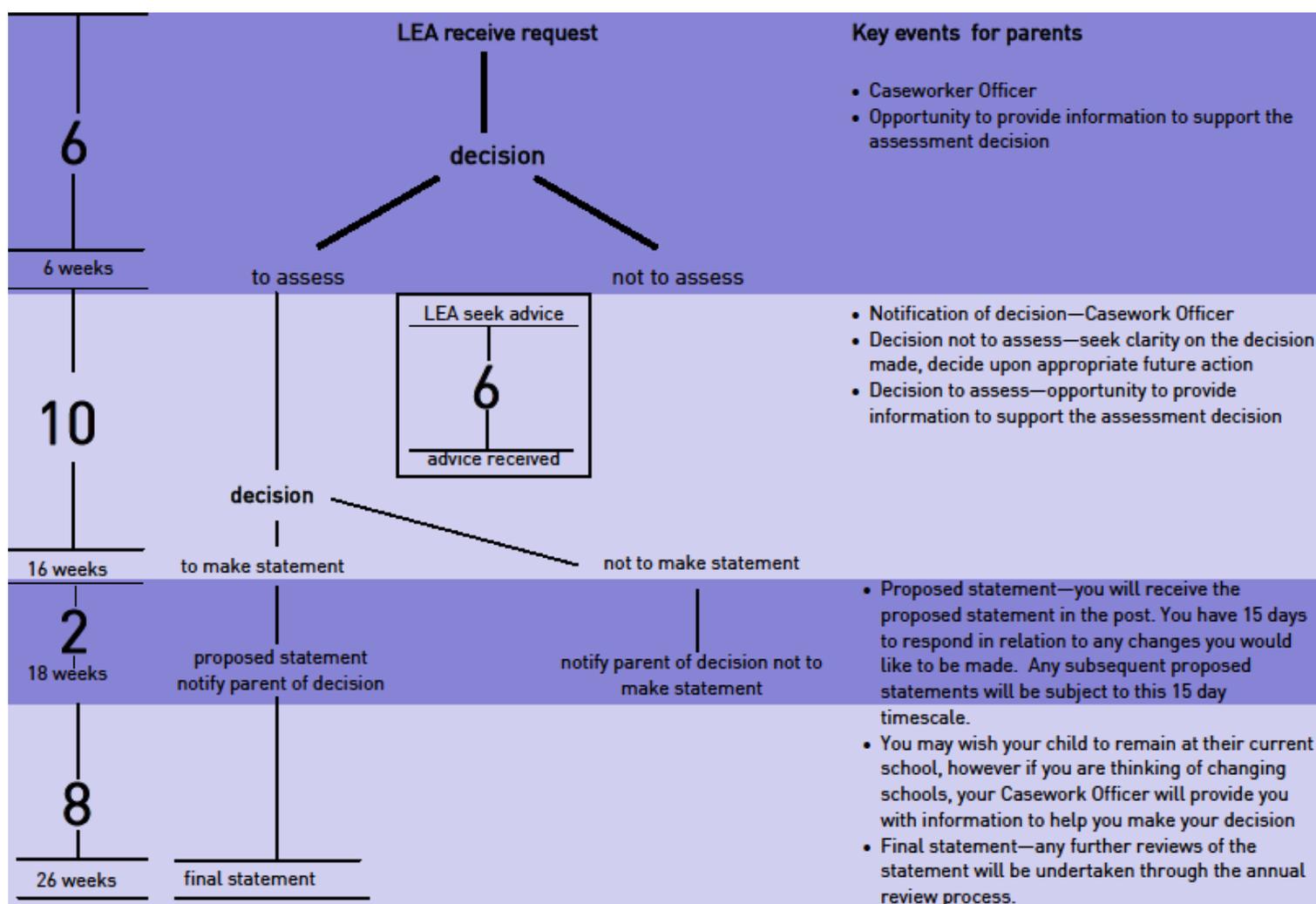
There are opportunities throughout the process to comment upon and amend the statement before it is finalised. Your Casework Officer will contact you at each stage of the process to explain what happens next.

In some instances the information gathering stage of the statutory assessment process may find evidence to support the child's needs being best met by a means other than a statement. Should this be the case, your Casework Officer will provide further information on what happens next.

Timescales for statutory assessment

Once we get a request, the statutory assessment process can take up to 26 weeks (six months) to complete. The timings are shown in the assessment flowchart.

Assessment flowchart



Information, advice and guidance

There are many sources of support, information and guidance; key people who you may wish to speak to include:

- SEN Casework Officer
- school/SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator)
- Parent Partnership Service - The Parent Partnership Service is a free and independent service who can offer help to understand the special educational needs processes and procedures. The Parent Partnership Service can put you in touch with the Disagreement Resolution Service, informal arrangements set up to help resolve or prevent any disagreements between you and the local authority. Parent Partnership can be contacted at Knowl House, Knowl Road, Mirfield WF14 9RA or telephone 01924 326646. (For more information please see the Parent Partnership Service information leaflet)

What if I am not happy with the process?

If you are not happy at any stage within the process you can meet with your Casework Officer as well as the Senior Casework Officer or SEN Manager from the SEN Assessment & Commissioning Team.

We would always aim to resolve your concerns however you have a right of appeal to the Special Educational Needs Tribunal at key stages of the process. Please note if any concern is referred to the Disagreement Resolution Service this does not affect your right to appeal.

Details of how to appeal are available from your Casework Officer or from the Parent Partnership Service.

Further Information

Your Casework Officer can advise you in relation to further information available from the SEN Assessment & Commissioning Team, as well as information sources external to the council.

Directorate for Children & Young People, Learning
Specialist Learning Support Service

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