

EVIDENCE WRITER'S PACK

(Version 2.2 August 2016)

INTRODUCTION

- This guide has been written for professionals who will be providing assessment advice and reports for Education, Health and Care (EHC) Needs Assessments.
- This guidance is a recognition that it is helpful for all professionals contributing advice to this process to have a common framework to refer to when drafting advice and producing their final reports. This guide addresses many questions raised by advice writers and also reflects best practice in a wide range of local and national teams who have been proactive in providing advice that meets the needs of children and families and the standards required by professional regulatory bodies.
- This guide has been written in collaboration with colleagues from education, health and social care services and representatives of parents and families. Alongside this local expertise, this guidance has been developed to incorporate and build upon the findings and best practice of national SEND Pathfinder local authorities.
- It is hoped that advice writers find this guide succinct and relevant to their professional role.

1. CONTEXT

1.1 What families say they want

- To see that professionals have listened to their views and included those views in their written advice.
- To see that the assessment/planning/intervention process starts with what young people and families want and need, not with what services typically do or deliver.
- Reports that are written primarily for parents, carers and young people to read: jargon-free, personal, as brief as possible, with unambiguous professional opinions, advice and conclusion and specific recommendations regarding needs and provision.

1.2 The SEN Code of Practice says...

Young people and their families must experience the assessment and planning process as a partnership leading to the co-production of EHC plans.

Paragraph 9.46 – ‘The local authority **must** gather advice from relevant professionals about the child or young person’s education, health and care needs, desired outcomes and special educational, health and care provision that may be required to meet identified needs and achieve desired outcomes.’

Paragraph 9:51 – ‘The evidence and advice submitted by those providing it should be clear, accessible and specific. They should provide advice about outcomes relevant for the age and phase of education of the child or young person and strategies for their achievement....’

Continued...



This template has been coproduced with:



Para 9.51 continued ‘...The local authority may provide guidance about the structure and format of advice and information to be provided. Professionals should limit their advice to areas in which they have expertise. They may comment on the amount of provision they consider a child or young person requires and local authorities should not have blanket policies which prevent them from doing so.’

1.3 The importance of outcomes-focused advice

‘Where professional advice is most helpful it is outcomes-focused. Professionals still too-often base their recommendations on descriptions of provision such as ‘Janette needs a social skills programme,’ instead of describing the outcomes that they believe the young person should achieve such as ‘Janette will be able to play with a group of friends of her own age’, and how those outcomes can be achieved.’

Where professional advice is most helpful it is clear that the professional understands **the difference between submitting a report and providing advice** – professional can become fluent in providing reports that contain lots of description but relatively few conclusions and recommendations. **Families and local authorities seek out and appreciate the advice of professionals, not their reports.**

2. YOUR ADVICE

2.1 Why are you being asked for advice?

As a result of your expertise you will be able to suggest strategies and approaches that will help support the child/young person achieving agreed outcomes.

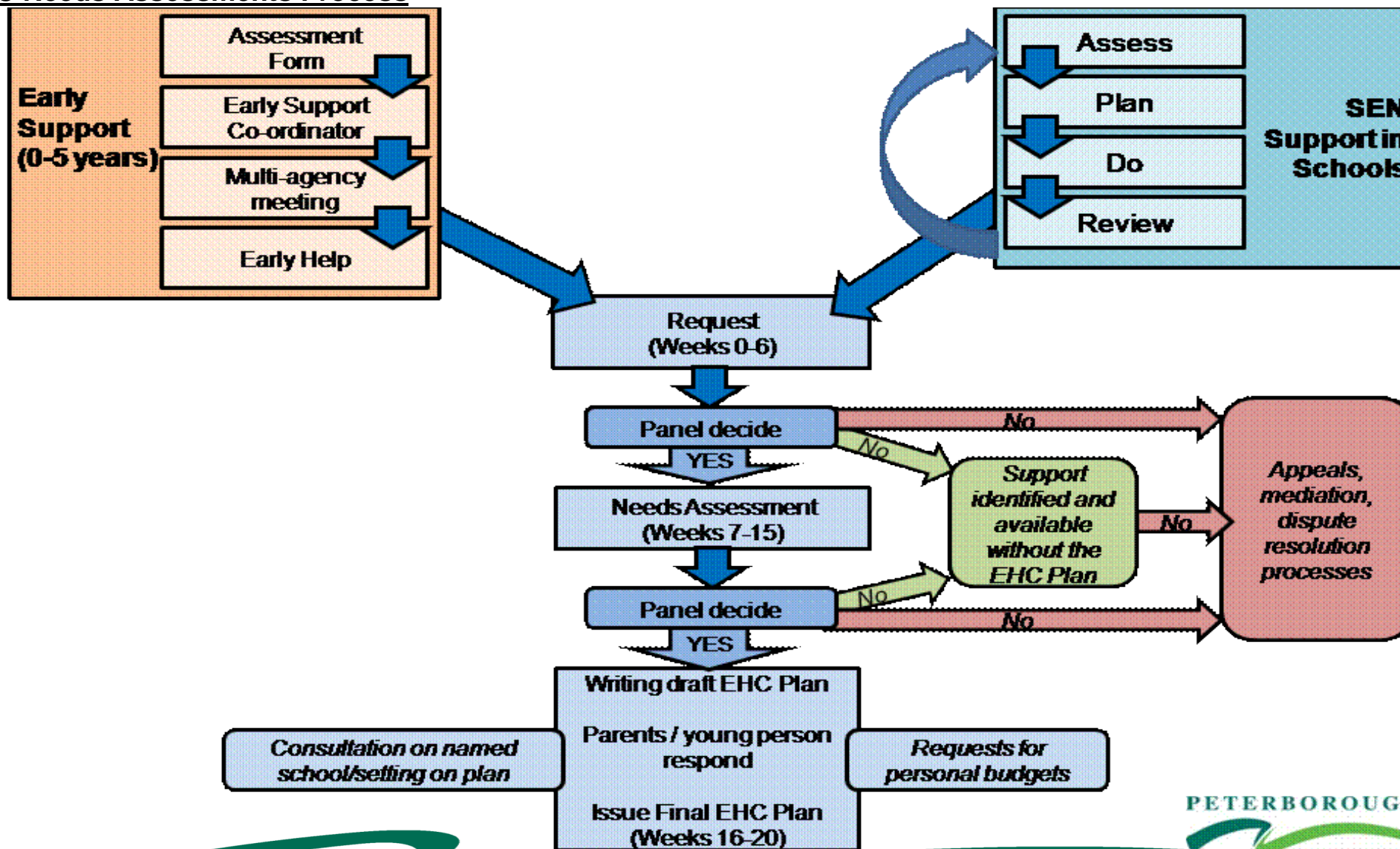
You may have already have been working with the child/ young person and have produced reports/ assessments and recommendations that could be made available. If these are relevant and within two years (or one year for children aged between 0-5 years old), these may be submitted.

2.2 How will your advice fit into the EHC Needs Assessment process?

Your advice has been requested in the light of certain information already received or questions raised. Overleaf is a diagram of the needs assessment process and highlights where your advice is likely to have been requested. Specific details on the content of the request for your advice/information can be found on the form sent to you.



EHC Needs Assessments Process



3. PRINCIPLES FOR WRITING ADVICE

The SEND Code of Practice is centred upon the following principles:

- *Co-production*
- *Person centred planning*
- *Outcomes-focused*

When developing this guidance, representatives of parents/families and professionals in Peterborough agreed to the following principles to underpin professional practice:

- We will ask children, young people and families to tell us only once
No child/ young person or parent/ carer should have to tell their story over and over again. This story will be gathered and shared at the 'alert' stage (i.e. when agencies are told that a Request for a Statutory Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment has been received) at the start of the needs assessment process. We will not ask a child, young person, or parent/ carer to tell their story more than once unless we require specific information related to our professional fields.
- We will produce advice on time
We will make every effort to ensure our processes and ways of working ensure that advice/information is requested, provided and considered as part of the needs assessment process on time, to ensure children and young people get the support they need as effectively and efficiently as possible and to meet the legal duties of the Local Authority.
- We will produce our advice in an accessible language format
As our reports and advice/information will be considered by all those involved in assessing the needs of a child or young person, including parents/ carers, we will use simple and clear language throughout our contributions. Where we use technical language, we will explain what it means (usually in bracketed phrases immediately after the used technical phrase).
- We will produce advice that informs, not instructs
We understand that our advice/information is going to be considered as part of the needs assessment process by fellow professionals, parents, carers and possibly children or young people, who will be considering the holistic needs of the child or young person. With this in mind, we will make sure that our contribution is focused on our areas of professional expertise.
- We will make our suggested outcomes measurable
By linking our suggested outcomes to these stages, we will help those considering the information understand the context in which the recommendations of support could be implemented, by the end of the Key Stage or educational phase (such as Key Stage 2 or Primary School).
- We will expect every professional to contribute in a meaningful way to the assessment of the educational, health and social care needs of children/ young people, when requested
This will usually involve providing information/ advice about the child or young person, their aspirations, needs, possible outcomes to work towards and the recommended support to achieve those outcomes. This will usually be through a written report. It may also involve attending a multi-agency meeting with the child/young person, parent/carer and other professionals involved.



4. COMPLETING THE ADVICE/INFORMATION FORM

This section will provide guidance on how to complete specific sections of the advice/information form.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This section should be completed by you to provide any further information that will help provide a context to your advice/information, for example research reports, or consultation reports.

It is important to state the information that has been gathered to form the basis of the advice and in particular to justify any findings. Please list all the sources of information used in preparing the advice/information. Please make sure to include the date and a brief description of this evidence.

AREAS OF STRENGTH

ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS

This section should be completed by you. Please complete to provide a current assessment of the child or young person's needs, stating the primary need first. The table uses the categories listed in the SEND Code of Practice. However, you do not need to comment on all the categories if they are not relevant to your professional area of expertise. Please detail standardised and non-standardised (including observational) tools. As appropriate, include what tools have been used and why, relevant details of the circumstances of the assessments undertaken, findings and the implications for learning.

The four categories of need listed in the Code of Practice are:

- Communication and Interaction
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health
- Cognition and Learning
- Sensory and/or Physical

Communication and Interaction

Need identified in Section B Number:		
E. Outcome/s		
F. Provision	What is required and how frequently will it be delivered	Who will deliver and review it

Cognition and Learning

Need identified in Section B Number:		
E. Outcome/s		
F. Provision	What is required and how frequently will it be delivered	Who will deliver and review it



Social, Emotional and Mental Health

Need identified in Section B Number:		
E. Outcome/s		
F. Provision	What is required and how frequently will it be delivered	Who will deliver and review it

Sensory and/or Physical

Need identified in Section B Number:		
E. Outcome/s		
F. Provision	What is required and how frequently will it be delivered	Who will deliver and review it

REVIEWS NOT ALREADY EXPRESSED

CHILD/YOUNG PERSONS' VIEWS/ PARENTS/ CARERS' VIEWS ABOUT THE PROFESSIONAL ASSESSMENT

This section should be completed by you. Please describe how you have consulted with the child, young person and/or the parent(s)/ carer(s) about your assessment and how they responded. Remember to apply the agreed principles listed above. Where you are adding to views recorded, please detail how these views were gained and their relevance in this assessment of need.

SUMMARY

This section should be completed by you. Using bullet points, please provide a brief summary of the strengths and needs you have outlined above. Please identify clearly the major areas of concern based on your assessment(s).



SUGGESTED OUTCOMES, RECOMMENDATIONS AND OBJECTIVES

This section should be completed by you. Please identify one or more outcomes as appropriate in the boxes provided and specify why they are important, what needs to happen to achieve them and what support your profession/service could provide to meet the outcome(s). These outcomes may be incorporated in to larger or longer-term outcomes detailed in an Education, Health and Care plan. Please only make suggestions relevant to your area of professional expertise.

WRITING GOOD OUTCOMES?

An outcome is understood as the expected benefit or difference made to an individual as a result of an intervention. It should be personal and not expressed from a service perspective. It is something that the person hopes to attain or achieve.

It is not a goal set by a professional as part of their service delivery, nor a piece of provision or description of part of an intervention.

Like most goals, the most helpful outcomes are written in a way that is *SMART* (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound).

When writing outcomes, avoid:

- Vagueness (try to set achievable measures/targets)
- Simply stating provision (e.g. being supported by a teaching assistant is not an outcome)
- Aiming for the very short term (outcomes should aim for the end of the Key Stage or educational phase)
- Not being ambitious enough – have high hopes for the child or young person.

Here are a few examples of good outcomes for various professions:

Education – By the end of Key Stage 1, Simon will be able to play in an age-appropriate way with at least one child of his own age for the majority of break times in school. In the long term Simon will be able to socialise safely in the community without adult supervision.

Health – By July 2016, Sapna will be able to use the toilet independently.

Social Care – By the end of Secondary school, Ho Yan will be able to travel by bus to the youth club one evening a week on his own.



5. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT/ AFTER WRITING THE ADVICE

Please return the form to the SEN Officer who made the request.

Your advice/information will be considered by the child or young person and the parent/family members and other professionals involved in the needs assessment of the child or young person. (Please see the diagram of the Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment process above).

6. CONTRIBUTORS

This guidance document was drafted with the assistance of colleagues representing advice writers in the following services across Peterborough:

- 0-25 Disability Service
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust
- Early Years and Child Intervention Service
- Educational Psychology Service
- Family Voice Peterborough
- NHS Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group
- Peterborough City Council
- Peterborough Regional College
- Scope
- SEN Team
- Specialist Teachers

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