

Assessment

This factsheet explains:

- what assessment involves
- how to ask for an assessment if you think your child has additional support needs
- what happens after your child is assessed.

What is assessment?

Assessment is not a one-off activity – it is a process of gathering information.

From a child’s birth, the professionals involved with them may assess their overall wellbeing using the SHANARRI indicators. SHANARRI stands for: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included.

In school

Assessment starts in pre-school and happens throughout a child’s time at school. It helps give a picture of a child’s progress and achievements. It can also identify the next steps they should take in their learning. And it helps teachers to move pupils through the curriculum.

Some children may need more help to enable them to reach their full potential. Assessment helps to identify whether a child has additional support needs and what kind of support is needed.

What duties do local authorities have regarding assessment and additional support needs?

Local authorities must ensure they have made arrangements to identify and meet the needs of children and young people who require additional support.

They should make it a priority to identify a child’s additional support needs early, with as little disruption to the child’s education as possible.

Local authorities must publish information on their arrangements to identify and meet the additional support needs of pupils they are responsible for.

Are there different types of assessment?

Yes. For most pupils, assessment happens as part of the daily learning and teaching in pre-school and school. It will be done by teaching and support for learning staff.

Some pupils may have complex or medical needs, or some parents or professionals may feel a different type of assessment or examination is needed, such as an assessment for dyslexia or for autism. In these cases, a specific assessment – educational, psychological or medical – may be needed. If there are concerns about a child's mental health, a specific assessment may be made by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Who will carry out a specific assessment?

A specific assessment may be done by education staff (for example, a support for learning teacher or an educational psychologist), by health staff (such as a speech and language therapist or a mental health worker) or by social work staff.

How will I be involved in assessments?

Parents' views must be considered as part of any assessment.

If the school has identified that your child has, or may have, additional support needs they should contact you or discuss it with you at a parents' evening. They should also involve you in decisions about any support to be provided.

If the school thinks your child needs a specific assessment or examination, they should discuss this with you before making the request.

In some cases professionals assessing a child may observe them in class, speak to their teachers and review their work. They may also involve parents and carers at this stage.

In other cases they may ask to observe your child at home to get a full picture of their development and needs.

What if I want my child's needs assessed?

If you think your child may have additional support needs, discuss your concerns first with their pre-school or school. They may already be aware of your child's needs and be providing suitable support. If not, you should discuss with them the options available for assessing your child.

You have the right to ask your local authority to carry out a specific assessment or examination at any time, although you cannot insist upon a particular kind of assessment (for example, the type of assessment test used) or ask for a particular person to carry it out.

You can also refer your child yourself or ask your GP or health visitor to refer your child to some agencies, such as occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, physiotherapy or mental health services. You should keep your child's school informed of any referrals you make.

Your child may also have the right to ask for their needs to be assessed. For more information, see **Enquire factsheet: Children's rights to education and additional support in school.**

How do I ask for an assessment?

Your request for an assessment must be in a format that can be kept for future reference. This could be a letter, email, video or audio recording. You should send it to your local authority's Additional Support for Learning Manager. You can find the contact for your area on the local authority section of Enquire's website or call our helpline for details – 0345 123 2303.

What should I include in my request?

You should include:

- your name, address and contact number
- your relationship to the child
- the child's name, address and date of birth
- the pre-school or school they currently attend
- your preferred language and form of communication—such as phone, email or letter
- a statement that you are formally asking for a specific assessment or examination
- the reasons for your request.

If your child is over 16 and has capacity, the request should be made in their name.

What should I include in the reasons for my request?

Depending on your child's situation you may want to include:

- a brief description of your child's difficulties including how they affect their education, e.g. if they struggle to concentrate, have difficulty communicating, or are falling behind with their school work
- any independent assessment report and the contact name of the organisation or person who prepared it.

What happens after I make a request for a specific assessment?

All requests are looked at individually. The local authority will decide if they think your child should have a specific assessment and inform you of their decision.

The authority should provide information about when and who will carry out the assessment.

How soon can I expect an answer?

There is no timescale set out in law for a local authority to respond to a request for a specific assessment. However, it would be reasonable to expect the authority to acknowledge your request within a few days and then inform you of their decision whether to proceed with the assessment within four weeks. You should contact the person you sent the request to if you have not heard from them within four weeks.

Other agencies that your local authority may ask to be involved in an assessment, such as NHS Boards or other local authorities, must normally carry out their part of the assessment within 10 weeks from the date of receiving the request. It would therefore be reasonable to expect an assessment to be carried out within 10-12 weeks of your request.

Can a local authority refuse my request for a specific assessment?

Yes. They can refuse if they feel the request is unreasonable. They may say it is unreasonable if:

- they don't think it is relevant, given the child's circumstances
- it is unnecessary as there has not been a significant change in the child's circumstances since an earlier assessment
- the assessment seems badly timed, e.g. it is too soon after a previous request
- the assessment would repeat a previous one.

If the local authority refuse to assess your child, they must tell you why.

If you are unhappy with their decision, you have the right to ask for mediation. You could also request independent adjudication. For more information about these ways of resolving disputes, see **Enquire factsheet: Resolving disagreements.**

My child has been assessed privately. Does the local authority have to take account of the results?

Schools and local authorities should take account of any information you, your child or other agencies involved with your child provide including private assessments. But they do not have a duty to carry out the recommendations in a private assessment.

What happens if my child is identified as having additional support needs?

If a child has additional support needs, the local authority must provide "adequate and efficient" support. The type and amount of support will depend on the child's individual needs.

Normally, education should be provided in a mainstream school. However, in some cases a special school may be more suitable for a child.

Your child may require an individualised educational programme, co-ordinated support plan or Child's Plan. For more information, see **Enquire factsheet: Planning children's and young people's learning.**

Where to get more information

Your local authority

Your local authority will be able to give you more information on their procedures for carrying out assessments. Visit their website for more information and contact details. You can also find contact details of your local authority on the Enquire website. www.enquire.org.uk/local-authorities

Enquire

For more information on assessment, see **The Parents' guide to additional support for learning (2018)**.

Enquire factsheet: Children's rights to education and additional support in school (2018)

Enquire factsheet: Planning children's and young people's learning (2018)

Enquire factsheet: Resolving disagreements (2018)

Scottish Government

Chapter 3 of **Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice, Scottish Government (third edition) 2017**, has more information about assessment. www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/12/9598/4

You can find more information in the **Guide to Getting it right for every child** from the Scottish Government.

www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright

ENQUIRE

Helping you understand additional support for learning

Enquire is the Scottish advice service for additional support for learning. We provide independent and impartial advice to parents and carers, to practitioners in education, social work and health services, and to children and young people themselves.

www.reach.scot offers advice to young people struggling at school. With practical tips on what can help and young people sharing their views and experiences on all sorts of life issues, Reach offers the 'go-to' source of advice to help pupils make the most out of their education.

This factsheet has been awarded the Clear English Standard.



Contact details

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