

Co-ordinated support plans (CSPs)

This factsheet explains:

- what a co-ordinated support plan (CSP) is
- which pupils may be eligible for a CSP
- how to request a CSP
- how a CSP is kept up to date
- what you can do if you are not happy with a decision about a CSP.

What is a co-ordinated support plan (CSP)?

A co-ordinated support plan:

- is an action plan used for some pupils who need significant additional support with their education
- sets broad and long-term goals for a pupil
- supports professionals from different agencies to work together to help the pupil achieve those goals.

Co-ordinated support plans are legal documents. Local authorities must provide the support that is written into a pupil's CSP.

Most pupils with additional support needs will not need a CSP to plan and co-ordinate their additional support. There are other types of written support plans, which have different names in different local authorities, which can help with monitoring your child's progress and keeping their support under review.

Find out more about other types of written support plans in our factsheet on [Planning your child's support](#).

Who is eligible for a CSP?

To be eligible for a CSP, your child must meet all the following criteria:

- a local authority must be responsible for their education
- they must need support due to ‘complex or multiple factors’ that negatively and significantly affect their education
- they have needs that will, or are likely to, last for more than a year
- they must need ‘significant additional support’ from education **and** from another department of the local authority (such as social work) or another agency or agencies¹ to reach their educational goals.

Complex or multiple factors

A complex factor is one that is likely to have a significant negative affect on a pupil’s education. It is the impact on the pupil’s learning that is important, rather than the reason they need support.

Multiple factors are things which might not be considered complex on their own, but together they are likely to have a significant negative affect on a pupil’s education.

Significant additional support

When deciding whether a pupil needs ‘significant’ additional support from education and at least one other agency, the local authority will consider the frequency, nature, intensity, and duration of the support they need.

Significant additional support can include support provided on an individual basis, in a group setting with others, or through staff working under the direction and guidance of those from another agency. When the law talks about ‘significant additional support’ it means significance from the point of view of the agency providing it, rather than from the point of view of the pupil or their parent or carer.

For example, on advice from a health professional, a teacher may make a minor change to their classroom set-up to help a deaf pupil communicate effectively. This might have a significant effect on the pupil, but it would not be considered ‘significant additional support’ by the health professional or the teacher.

If a pupil needs small amounts of support from several different professionals from an agency, such as a health board, this could also amount to ‘significant’ support.

¹This must be one or more of: an NHS board, another local authority, Skills Development Scotland, or a further or higher education institution.

Who decides which pupils need a CSP?

Local authorities are responsible for deciding which pupils meet the criteria for a CSP, and then for preparing the plans and keeping them under review. Every local authority should have arrangements in place to help them identify which children may need a CSP. The local authority must let you know if they decide to assess your child to find out if they need a CSP.

Professionals who work closely with pupils, such as teachers, social workers, or health professionals, can also tell local authorities about pupils that they think need a CSP.

You, and your child if they are aged 12 or over, also have the right to ask your local authority to assess your child for a CSP.

Pupils who are looked after (when a local authority has legal responsibility for their care and wellbeing) should automatically be considered for a CSP.

How do I ask the local authority to assess my child for a CSP?

You can make the request to your local authority directly, or you can go through your child's school or nursery.

Your request must be in a form that can be kept for future reference. This will usually be an email or letter but can also be a video or audio recording.

If your child is aged 12-15, they may also be able to request an assessment to find out if they need a CSP. Find out more in our factsheet on [Rights of children aged 12-15](#).

If they are 16 or older and they can understand how to, your child can make the request themselves. If they are not able to do this, you can still make the request on their behalf.

What information should my request include?

You should include:

- your name and address, your relationship to your child, and a contact telephone number
- your child's name, address, date of birth, and the name of their nursery or school
- a note of your preferred form of communication (such as phone, email, or letter)

- a statement that you are formally asking for the local authority to assess whether your child needs a CSP
- the reasons for your request and why you think your child needs a CSP.

This last point is essential. We suggest including:

- a brief description of your child's difficulties (including any diagnoses, if relevant) and how these affect their education - for example if they have difficulty concentrating or communicating
- a summary of the educational support your child already gets, or needs
- a summary of the support your child already gets, or needs, from other agencies such as social workers or health professionals
- the names of any professionals who work with your child.

How long will it take to get an answer to my request?

The local authority has eight weeks to let you know whether they will accept your request to assess your child for a CSP. If you make your request during the school summer holiday period, the maximum time for a decision extends to 16 weeks.

What if the local authority refuses my request?

If the local authority refuses your request to assess your child for a CSP, they must write to you to explain why. They must also tell you about your right to appeal the decision. If you have not had a decision after eight weeks, this is known as a 'deemed refusal', and you also have the right to appeal the decision.

If you wish to appeal the refusal, you have two months from the date of the refusal or 'deemed refusal' to submit an appeal (called 'making a reference') to the Additional Support Needs Tribunal. See '**What can I do if I'm not happy with a decision about a CSP?**' on page 9 for more about this.

What happens next if the local authority accepts my request?

If your local authority decides to assess your child for a CSP, they must write to you to let you know. The local authority has 16 weeks to assess whether your child needs a CSP, and if they decide that they do need one, they must also produce the completed plan within this time.

At this time, you have the right to ask the local authority for a particular type of assessment of your child's needs, if you feel it is needed. This could be psychological, medical, or educational. Find out more in our factsheet on [Identifying and assessing your child's needs](#).

How will I and my child be involved in the assessment?

When deciding whether your child needs a CSP, the local authority must seek and take account of:

- relevant advice and information from professionals that work with your child
- relevant information provided to them by, or on behalf of, your child (this includes information you provide about your child)
- your and your child's views.

They should tell you:

- who they are planning to seek advice and information from
- what assessments of your child's needs they feel are needed (if any)
- your rights to be involved in the process
- a timescale for the process.

What if the authority decides my child is not eligible for a CSP?

If, after assessing your child, the local authority decides your child does not need a CSP, or if you have not had a decision after 16 weeks, you have the right to refer their decision to the Additional Support Needs Tribunal. See '**What can I do if I am not happy with a decision about a CSP?**' on page 9 for more about this.

Preparing the CSP

If the local authority decides that your child needs a CSP, an officer in the education department of your local authority will have lead responsibility for preparing the plan. Sometimes they ask another professional (this could be someone at your child's school) to put together the contents of the plan. The stages that are usually involved in preparing the plan are summarised below.

Step 1

You (and your child if appropriate) will usually be invited to attend a meeting with staff from their school or nursery. Other professionals from different agencies who may be involved in supporting your child will usually also attend. If your child does not want to attend meetings or is unable to, they must still be asked for their views and these must be considered.

This is an opportunity for you to give your views and provide any information that you think may be helpful in preparing the plan.

Step 2

The professional responsible for preparing the CSP will draw up a first draft of the plan. In doing this, they must consider:

- why your child needs additional support
- what support they are currently getting
- any aims or goals that your child is working towards, and how education and other agencies will help your child achieve them
- information and advice they have received from you, your child, and the professionals who support your child
- information from any assessments your child has had
- which agency or agencies will be responsible for providing each element support of support set out in the plan
- the school or nursery your child will attend
- the person in the local authority you can contact for advice and information about your child's CSP.

They may arrange further meetings with you, if needed, to discuss and amend the draft.

Step 3

The professional responsible for the plan will send a copy of the draft plan to you and everyone involved to comment on. They may then make further changes to the plan.

Step 4

Once everyone has agreed on the contents of the plan, the local authority will sign it off. A date is set to review the plan, which will normally be one year later. A CSP co-ordinator will be appointed if this has not already been done.

At this point you should be told about your right to refer any disagreement you have about the contents of the plan to the Additional Support Needs Tribunal. See '**What can I do if I am not happy with a decision about a CSP?**' on page 9 for more about this.

Step 5

A copy of the CSP will be sent to you. Your child's school or nursery and the local authority must also keep a copy.

The CSP is now active, and the support written in the plan must be provided to your child.

Time limit exceptions

There are certain circumstances when a local authority can extend the 16-week time limit to decide whether your child needs a CSP and prepare the plan. These include situations where:

- the local authority has asked another agency for help, and they have not been able to respond within the 16 weeks
- you have made a request for a particular kind of assessment of your child's needs, and it cannot take place (or the results will not be known) by the end of the 16 weeks.

If a local authority becomes aware that the limit is unlikely to be met, they must let you know and give you a new date by which the process will be completed. They must not extend the time limit by more than is necessary in the circumstances, and in any situation they must not take more than 24 weeks to prepare your child's CSP.

The contents of the CSP

The CSP must contain:

- information about your child (e.g. name, age, gender), their contact details and preferred language/form of communication
- your contact details and preferred language/form of communication
- a profile focussing on your child's strengths and abilities, activities they like to do, and how they like to learn
- the factors that have led to your child needing additional support
- the educational objectives your child is working towards
- the additional support your child needs to reach these objectives
- who will provide the support
- the name of the school or nursery your child attends

- your comments on the plan and the CSP process
- your child's comments on the plan and the CSP process
- a review timetable
- who will co-ordinate the support (the CSP co-ordinator)
- who at the local authority you can contact for advice and information.

Delivering the support in the CSP

The CSP co-ordinator named on the plan is responsible for making sure that the support written into your child's CSP is provided to them. The CSP co-ordinator will often be someone from your child's school or nursery, such as a deputy head or head teacher, but it can also be a professional from another agency, or an officer at the local authority.

The CSP co-ordinator should work closely with the team who support your child. They should know what to do if there are any issues with their support provision. For example, if there are any breaks in your child's support (for example due to staff absence), the CSP co-ordinator must contact the relevant agency to make sure alternative arrangements are in place for your child.

If you feel that your child is not getting the support that is set out in the CSP, you should discuss your concerns with the CSP co-ordinator in the first instance. If you continue to feel that the support is not being delivered, you can ask for mediation or refer your concerns to the Additional Support Needs Tribunal. See **'What can I do if I am not happy with a decision about a CSP?'** below for more about this.

How often will my child's CSP be reviewed?

The local authority must review your child's CSP at least every 12 months, making changes to it as needed. They must complete the review within 12 weeks of the expiry date on the CSP (usually the anniversary of the date the CSP was last signed off by the local authority). There are some exceptions to this timescale, with an absolute maximum time of 20 weeks to complete the review.

Reviews can take place earlier if there has been a significant change in your child's circumstances. The local authority can arrange this, and you also have the right to request an early review. If you do this, the local authority has four weeks to let you know if they agree to the early review.

The local authority should make sure that everyone involved receives advance notice of review meetings, giving enough time to make any changes and for the plan to be signed off within the 12-week timescale.

During the review, the local authority must ask for your and your child's views. They should consider:

- how far the educational objectives have been met
- whether new objectives should be set
- whether there have been any changes in your child's support needs.

If the local authority fails to complete the review within the 12-week timescale, or if the outcome of the review is that your child no longer needs a CSP and you disagree, you can refer this to the Additional Support Needs Tribunal. See the next section for more about this.

What can I do if I am not happy with a decision about a CSP?

You can refer your disagreement about the CSP to the Additional Support Needs Tribunal (called 'making a reference') if:

- you are not happy with any decisions that the local authority makes about your child's CSP (including a decision not to prepare a CSP for your child)
- the local authority fails to meet the timescales for preparing or reviewing a CSP, or
- the support set out in the CSP is not delivered.

If your child is aged 12 or over, they may also be able to make the reference to the tribunal.

What are the timescales for making a reference to the tribunal?

You have **two months** to make a reference to the tribunal from:

- the date of the decision that you disagree with
- the date by which the local authority should have made a decision or carried out a review, but failed to do so
- the date on which the local authority first failed to provide the support set out in the CSP.

Are there any alternatives to making a reference to the tribunal?

It is always a good idea to try and resolve any disagreements about your child's education without using formal or legal routes. Here are some other things you can try:

- if your child has a CSP, contact the CSP co-ordinator to discuss your concerns
- get in touch with the person responsible for additional support for learning at your local authority
- request mediation with your local authority (see our factsheet on [Mediation](#) for more about this).

However, it is important to bear in mind the timescales for making a reference. Even if you decide to make a reference to the tribunal, you can continue to discuss your concerns with the CSP co-ordinator or local authority or ask for mediation. You can withdraw your reference at any time.

There is support available to make a reference to the tribunal from a free advocacy and legal support service called Let's Talk ASN (contact details in the next section). Find out more about the tribunal in our factsheet on [The Additional Support Needs Tribunal](#).

Where can I find out more?

Supporting Children's Learning: Statutory Guidance on the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Scotland Act 2004 (as amended), Code of Practice (2017): www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-childrens-learning-statutory-guidance-education-additional-support-learning-scotland

Chapter 5 of the Scottish Government's guidance on additional support for learning is all about CSPs. The guidance also has a **template CSP**, and some **notes about decisions of whether a pupil needs 'significant' additional support**.

Let's Talk ASN

Tel: 0141 445 1955

Email: letstalkasn@edlaw.org.uk

Let's Talk ASN is the national free advocacy and legal support service for anyone who has the right to make a reference to the Additional Support Needs Tribunal. The service is run by the Govan Law Centre and Barnardo's Scotland, and is funded by the Scottish Government.

The Additional Support Needs Tribunal www.healthandeducationchamber.scot/additional-support-needs/12

The tribunal's website has information and guidance about making a reference.



How Enquire can help

Enquire can help you understand your child's rights to additional support for learning and how to work in partnership with their school or nursery to make sure your child gets the support they need.

Enquire can:

- explain your child's rights to additional support for learning
- listen to any questions and concerns
- advise you on the way forward
- help you find local education and support services.

You can contact our helpline on **0345 123 2303** or **info@enquire.org.uk**
Access to interpreters is available.

You can also find lots more information about additional support for learning, including our full range of publications, at **www.enquire.org.uk**

The information on our website is available in over 100 languages and with a range of accessibility tools, such as text-to-speech.

Reach, as part of Enquire, provides advice and information for children, parents, carers and professionals about children's rights to additional support for learning: **www.reach.scot**

Enquire is also a partner in the My Rights, My Say service. My Rights, My Say supports children aged 12-15 with additional support needs to exercise their rights to be involved in decisions about their support in school:
www.myrightsmysay.scot

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Enquire is funded by the Scottish Government and managed by Children in Scotland



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