

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

An introduction to the new system





Hello

This is an introduction to the changes that will be introduced in September 2014 to support children and young people with special education needs and disabilities. I hope you find it useful and it helps you understand what's happening and why.

Most of us would agree that the statement system needed to be improved. The new approach puts children, young people and families at the centre of the process and makes sure they can have their say about the support they get.

We've been working with families on this since 2012. That means our staff are well prepared. I'm proud of the work they've done to get us ready for September but there is still a lot to be done. We also know big changes can cause confusion. I hope this guide answers any questions you may have, but if you want more information help is available and you can find out more at www.wigan.gov.uk/sendlocaloffer

We want to make this transition as easy as possible for you and your family. If you have any feedback contact us at local.offer@wigan.gov.uk. If you want to know about opportunities for involvement please get in touch by emailing e.saunders@embracewiganandleigh.org.uk or Liz.Saunders@Wigan.gov.uk. You can also call us on **01942 233323**.

Finally, I want to be absolutely clear - the council wants the best for the children and young people it supports. We will do all we can to help you through the system and get the right support.

Regards,

Councillor Jo Platt

Wigan Council cabinet member for children and young people.

What's happening?

The government is replacing the statement system with a new document called an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC).

Why?

The changes are a rethink of how children and young people with special educational needs are supported. The new system aims to put each child and young person and their family at the centre of any discussion about the support they get.

Why change the current system?

Previously Statements focused on a child's or young person's special educational needs and didn't describe other needs like health and social care. This meant there wasn't always a co-ordinated approach to supporting their needs.

So what's changing?

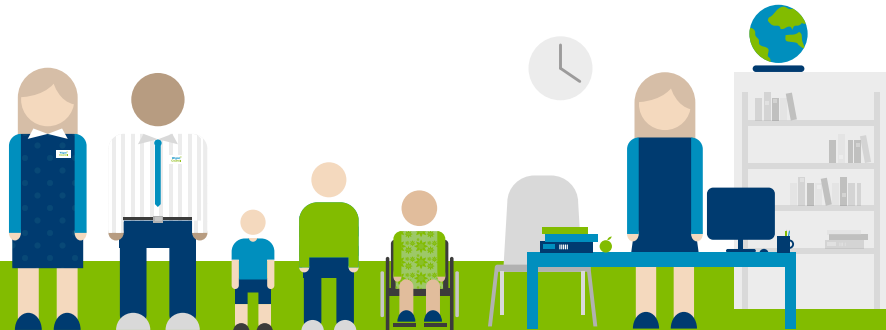
The government's solution is to have services working together to produce a single EHC. For some young people the plans will continue until they are 25 if they stay in education or training. Statements currently finish when a child leaves school. Other changes include the offer of a personal budget that can be used by families to pay directly for services. Councils also have to publish a Local Offer for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) which details what services are available to all children with SEND whether they have an EHC plan or not.

What are EHC plans?

EHC plans are legal documents describing a child's or young person's needs, what they want to achieve and what they require to meet those needs. Health workers, schools, colleges/post 16 institutions and council teams may all be involved and are responsible for the development of the plan. Parents, children and young people will be at the centre of the process and have much more choice and control over what happens to them.

How will you have more choice and control?

Parents, children and young people will be involved in every stage of the process. They will give their views about what they hope to achieve and what support they need. All families whose child has a plan will have the right to request a personal budget. This will allow young people or parents to buy support identified in the plan directly rather than relying on the local authority to spend the money on their behalf.



Who will need an EHC Plan?

Most children and young people with SEND will not need an EHC plan as they will be able to access support already available to them in their school or other setting and their community through the Local Offer. For those with more complex needs an EHC plan will be considered.

What's the Local Offer?

The local offer sets out the services available for children and young people with special education needs and disabilities and what families can expect from them. It includes information such as education, health and care provision for children, arrangements for assessing children's needs, travel to and from school, leisure activities and information about support and advice for parents. You can find the local offer at www.wigan.gov.uk/sendlocaloffer



What's been done to prepare for the changes?

Wigan Council has been a pathfinder area - trialling the changes for two years. We worked closely with the Department for Education and the Department of Health developing and testing the new process and feeding back to the government.

Where do I get more information?

We shall be offering opportunities, e.g. drop-in sessions, which will be advertised on the Local Offer website, in the Children's Disability Newsletter and directly to those families who have supplied an email address. If you do not routinely receive information by email and would like to do so, get involved with the Parent Participation Development Group or just wish to be kept informed about developments and opportunities for parent participation please contact: Parent Participation at e.saunders@embracewiganandleigh.org.uk or Liz.Saunders@Wigan.gov.uk Tel: 01942 233323

Feedback

We also value your opinion and feedback, and you can do this by contacting local.offer@wigan.gov.uk

