

Halton SEND PCF - Parent Carer Evening Zoom Meeting

Session context:

Thursday, 12th February 2026

We've tried to group similar questions together as some of the questions relate to the same subject matter so we can make sure we're providing useful information to everyone if we respond in this way.

Question 1 - EHCP Reviews: Why does it take longer than statutory time to receive back?

Question 2 - Getting plans finalised 12 months after the review is ridiculous: can you let us know timelines and targets for timeliness?

Question 3 - Why are reviews done by school and medical and not updated at the same time?

Question 4 - Why can't co-ordinators be available, specifically for reviews within key stage changes or setting changes?

Question 5 - No staff attend reviews, why?

Thank you for raising this, because we know that annual reviews and especially those important transition points can be stressful for families. We know that how things are at the moment is not good enough, but we are working hard to make improvements and things are getting better.

As you know there are legal timescales for annual reviews, but nationally many local areas are struggling to meet them due to a big increase in demand. This is one of the reasons why the wider national SEND reforms are underway.

In Halton, we are actively working to improve this. Some of the things we've done are:

- Added capacity to the SEND Assessment and Provision Team.
- Brought in a fixed term additional Assessment Co-ordinator who focussed on annual reviews.
- Started using data to prioritise children based on how long their review has been overdue.
- Implementing an online portal called Synergy Web which will include a professionals and parent portals to enable swifter information sharing and contributions to draft EHCPs & annual reviews. This will be a phased approach starting with new EHCPs first but annual reviews are part of this improvement programme.
- Created a Go To Guide for parents and professionals. Professionals' version shared, parents' version still being worked on to ensure accessible format.

We have set ambitious targets for this area of work and we are already seeing improvement. In November 2023, 54.4 percent of annual reviews were completed within 12 months. By January 2026 this had improved to 69.6 percent, which is above the England average of 53.5 percent.

If anyone here is waiting for an outcome, we are very happy to look at individual cases and provide a clear update.

Question 6 - Senco's completing reviews is not good enough, these are complex children and better oversight is required. The senco doesn't even know my child well enough!

Question 7 - The EHCP does not reflect the child at present because they haven't changed since first issued, schools seem to update their paperwork but EHCP sees no changes. How do we hold schools accountable in this?

Question 8 - I'm not sure what to do at my review, is there any leaflets or visuals for process?

If a review is being led by someone who does not know your child well enough, or the plan does not reflect your child because it has not been updated, this can limit how effective the review is, as annual reviews work best when they are grounded in the child's lived experience and day-to-day support.

The SEND Code of Practice states that the local authority must make sure every EHCP is reviewed at least every 12 months. In almost all cases, the local authority asks the education setting to lead the annual review meeting because the setting knows the child best and has the clearest picture of progress and what is working.

Annual reviews should also bring in the right people. The code says key partners must be invited and that the meeting should focus on progress towards outcomes and what needs to change.

If you feel the SENCO does not know your child well enough, a practical next step is to ask the school to ensure the people who know your child best attend, for example the class teacher, key worker, and any involved professionals.

Shelley Nicholson, Deputy Head of Service, SEND Assessment and Provision Team is in the process of finalising our Parent Carer Go to Guide for Annual Reviews and these will be shared as soon as they've been finalised. In the meantime, you could seek support through SENDIASS Tel: [0151 511 7733](tel:01515117733) Email: SENDIASS@halton.gov.uk

Here's a link to their information leaflet [10717 SEND Partnership Leaflet](#)

Alternatively IPSEA they have some really useful guides on their website for parents around the process [The annual review process | \(IPSEA\) Independent Provider of Special Education Advice](#) Their checklist is really helpful [Download.ashx](#)

Question 9 – What happens to the EHCP during transition to a new school, or further education?

Your child's EHCP does not stop just because they change school or move into college. The plan stays in place and must transfer with them.

The local authority has a legal duty to make sure the EHCP continues and that the new setting receives the plan in good time so support can be arranged for day one. There should also be a transition annual review before the move, so everyone can plan ahead and make sure the right support is ready.

If you are approaching a transition and are unsure what is happening, please contact the SEND Assessment and Provision Team senat@halton.gov.uk and we will check your child's case and explain next steps.

Question 10 - How early is transition included in EHCP, my child does not seem prepared and we feel no discussions been held?

From Year 9 onwards an annual review considers what provision is required to help your child, or you as a young person, to prepare for adulthood and independent living. This is a legal duty.

We would always advise schools and education settings to start planning early. The SEND Code clearly sets out what needs to be considered in annual reviews from Year 9 onwards.

For teenagers, preparation for adult life has to be part of the planning and support for them. Discussions about their future should focus on what they want to achieve and the best way to support them to achieve. There may be very good reasons to start planning for adulthood sooner than Year 9 and the Code suggests that it can be helpful for EHC plan reviews before Year 9 to have this focus too.

In Halton we have established a new Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) Strategic Board. This is an important step in improving how we support young people with SEND as they move towards adulthood.

Families have told us that the journey into adulthood can sometimes feel confusing, with information coming from lots of different places and creating a sense of being on the 'cliff edge'. We want to change this.

Further information about this was included in our new Parent and Carers Newsletter, which also included an invitation for you to become involved in shaping this process if you would like to. Kate Charlton, DSCO will be returning to the PCF Coffee Morning and here to share an update on this:
[Parent and Carers Newsletter from Halton Borough Council](#)

Question 11 - Is there any local services to help me navigate the process? I don't know what should be included or what a good EHCP should look like?

We recognise that the EHCP process can sometimes feel complex to navigate. In Halton we are committed to working alongside parents and carers to make the process as clear and supportive as possible.

Below is a link to our Local Offer where you will find some helpful information and frequently asked questions to help guide you through each stage: [Education, Health and Care \(EHC\) Plan](#)

The SEND Assessment and Provision Team will also always want to help you with this. Talking to and support our parents and carers is one of the parts of the job we enjoy most. The additional staff that we have appointed recently has meant that we've been able to respond to more parents in a quicker time but we want to do more of this.

The team can be contacted by emailing the central inbox senat@halton.gov.uk your query will be forwarded on to your Assessment Co-ordinator who will do their best to support you in navigating the process.

Other help local services to support parents and carers with the EHCP needs assessment process is SENDIASS (details provided above).

In addition, staff from Halton Education, Inclusion & Provision attend the PCF Coffee Mornings monthly and will be happy to support where they're able to or provide signposting.

Question 12 - How will my teenager be fully included to actively participate in their reviews?

Young people should be at the centre of their annual reviews.

The SEND Code of Practice is very clear that children and young people must be supported to take part in decisions about their own support. Reviews should focus on what matters to them, their goals for the future, and what helps them to feel confident and heard.

This might look different for each young person. Some will want to attend the meeting, others may prefer to share their views in writing, through drawings, videos, or with support from someone they trust.

Schools and colleges should offer alternative ways for them to contribute. What matters most is that their voice shapes the discussion and outcomes.

We would advise that you speak with your child's school's SENDCo to see how they plan to make sure that they're able to be include.

Here's a helpful video from our Local Offer that explains about the importance of a Person Centred approach - <https://youtu.be/jsnQEAYp8Rk>
[Local Offer - Education, Health and Care \(EHC\) Plan](#)