

# Multi-agency special educational needs (SEN) statutory assessment panel

Information for  
parents and carers



Nottinghamshire  
County Council



The Parent Partnership Service provides information, advice and support for parents of children with special educational needs. For further information please contact the Parent Partnership helpline or write to them at:

**Suite 5 Clarendon Chambers,  
32 Clarendon St,  
Nottingham,  
NG1 5LN**

**Helpline 0115 948 2888**

Family Action takes the views of people who use our services very seriously. If you have a complaint, or wish to make a comment about the operation of the panel in regard to your child, please contact the Complaints Officer who will send you Family Actions's complaints leaflet:

Family Action  
501-505 Kingsland Rd  
London  
E8 4AU  
Tel: 0207 254 6251.

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## What can I do if I disagree with the decision the LA makes following the recommendation of the panel?

Your rights do not change. You can make your views known to the LA officer who writes to you with the decision. This officer will arrange to meet with you to talk about the decision. You can also use the Parent Partnership Service or a mediation service to help you resolve the situation. You have a statutory right to appeal to the SEN and Disability Tribunal if you are unhappy with the decision. All the agencies which work with parents and carers of children with special educational needs are committed to helping you reach agreement and ensure that suitable provision is made for your child.

## Useful Phone Numbers

SEN Strategic Services:  
0115 977 3554

SEN Support Services  
North Base (Ashfield, Mansfield,  
Bassetlaw and Newark)  
01623 433 433

SEN Support Services  
South Base (Broxtowe, Gedling and  
Rushcliffe)  
0115 854 6000

This information is for  
parents of children with  
special educational needs  
(SEN) who are being  
considered for a statutory  
assessment of their needs  
under the Education Act

## **Multi-agency Special Educational Needs (SEN) assessment panel**

This information is for parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) who are being considered for a statutory assessment of their needs under the Education Act 1996. The SEN Code of Practice recommends a graduated response that encompasses a range of strategies and levels of support.

### **A panel system.**

In Nottinghamshire a multi-agency panel considers information about individual children when an assessment has been requested by their parent/carer, or by a school, or referred by a Local Authority officer.

### **What does the panel do?**

The panel looks at the evidence and matches it against the criteria set out in the SEN Code of Practice (2001) before making a recommendation to the LA. The panel will consider all information and make a recommendation that an assessment is necessary or what other actions may be taken. The LA will consider this recommendation and make the final decision. The LA has legal responsibility for deciding whether it needs to carry out a statutory assessment of a child's needs and for notifying parents of its decision by letter.

### **How does it work?**

The panel system is chaired and managed by a voluntary organisation, Family Action (FA).

Members of the panel include a LA SEN officer, a school SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator), a Head Teacher or Deputy Head, a Parent Partnership Service worker, an Educational Psychologist and representatives from Social Care, Health and the other Support Services (Inclusion Support Service, Behaviour Support Team etc.).

Panel members do not know the individual children for whom assessments are requested. Members represent their agencies and are chosen for their experience in special educational needs and related areas of work. They are all required to undertake specific training to prepare them for their role as panel members.

### **Does it mean slower decisions?**

No, the timescale is the same. Parents receive a decision from the LA six weeks after a request for an assessment has been made.

### **How are parents involved?**

The LA will write to you to ask for your views on your child's special educational needs. Your views are then forwarded to the panel.

### **Are a child's views important?**

Yes. The panel will take into consideration what a child wants for their education and their views on school and the support they receive. Parents, schools and support services will be asked to gain the views of the child wherever possible.

### **What are the benefits of a panel system?**

The panel system should lead to more consistent decisions and the whole process will be more open. A steering group for the Panel meets twice a year. Reports from the panel and LA are presented to this group which evaluates, monitors and considers development and implementation of local and national policy, guidance and practice.

### **Is it confidential?**

Yes. Members of the panel sign a confidentiality agreement and copies of reports and information about children are disposed of securely by Family Action.