

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS PANEL – SUMMARY

The SEN Panel helps to ensure that the needs of children/young people are met locally as flexibly and as quickly as possible, in an inclusive environment, while ensuring the best use of council budgets and services. The Panel also helps to ensure fairness, accountability and transparency in the council's decision making.

The Panel carries out the following functions:

- Makes decisions on whether to proceed with a request for statutory assessment.
- Makes decisions on whether to issue a proposed statement or a note in lieu once a statutory assessment has been completed.
- Makes placement and provision decisions for all children with statements, including those moving into the area. Where a coordinated multi-agency package of support is required, the case may be referred on to the Multi-Agency Resources Panel (MARF).
- Makes emergency placement or provision decisions for children without statements in exceptional circumstances.

Frequency of Meetings

Meetings are held weekly during term time on Tuesday afternoons between 3.00pm and 5.30pm (dependent on the number of cases)

Membership and roles

- Inclusion Manager (SEN) – chairs the panel and makes final decisions based on the views of members and on SEN criteria.
- Senior Educational Psychologist – clarifies the needs of the child/young person and the support needed to meet these needs.
- SEN Officers – provide details of cases and advice on placement options, use of resources and the application of policies.
- Primary and secondary school headteacher, senior management team member or SENco – represents the views of their school sector and provides advice on the support available in a mainstream setting.
- Special school headteacher – represents the views of the special school sector and provides advice on the support available in a specialist setting.
- SEN Inspector – provides advice on the effectiveness of school provision.

The following are also invited from other services:

- Social Care representative / Health Service representative – provide information on any prior involvement from their service and advice on the support available.

Anyone who attends panel should be familiar with the SEN Code of Practice and our agreed SEN funding approach (see below).

Status of decisions

The SEN Panel advises the council on all aspects of the statutory assessment process. If schools, parents or professionals have concerns about Panel decisions, the SEN team are happy to discuss these.

However, the Panel can only re-consider specific decisions if compelling new evidence emerges or there is a significant development regarding the pupil's circumstances.

Case representation

Where the Panel is discussing a proposed statement, a request for additional resources or a change of placement, the headteacher of the school currently attended by the child may attend the discussion or send a representative. Other professionals involved in a case may also attend.

Documentation

For moderations of requests for statutory assessment, the request form will be sent out with the agenda. Panel members will need to read this fully and consider their views as they will be required to give an opinion on the need to assess.

Other cases will be presented on the day by SEN team members, but panel members will need to read the proposed statement or referral form to enable them to contribute fully to the discussion

Southampton SEN funding policy

In line with the SEN Code of Practice, our funding approach aims to allow the needs of the great majority of children and young people to be met without statutory assessment being required.

All the funding for children and young people experiencing 'high incidence' needs is delegated to schools through an agreed funding formula. High incidence needs are those experienced by a significant number of children in schools and include emotional, social and behavioural difficulties, moderate learning difficulties and specific learning difficulties. Some children and young people with high-incidence needs do have statements, but their provision remains fully funded by their school via the delegated SEN budget.

The centrally retained SEN budget is for the small minority of children and young people with 'low incidence' needs. These needs are long term, severe and complex and include severe autism, including language and communication disorders, severe learning difficulties, severe language disorders and/or impairments and severe sensory impairment. In these cases, schools still provide the first five hours of LSA support from their delegated resources.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS PANEL – GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS

Panel members may wish to consider the following questions when making decisions:

- For requests for statutory assessment, additional support or change of placement, does the documentation include complete, relevant and up to date evidence, e.g. IEPs, behaviour logs, etc.?
- Why is statutory assessment being requested at this time? What will be the purpose and benefits? Are the child/young person's special educational needs long-term, severe and complex? Has the school demonstrated in their written evidence that all the pre-statutory stages have been exhausted? What difference has their intervention made?
- Is there evidence of purposeful, systematic and structured teaching and intervention over a period of time? If so, what progress has the child made? What do the records and reports tell us about the quality and effectiveness of intervention? If there are gaps, what are these and how can they be addressed? Have there been IEP reviews and has each of these led to a re-evaluation and re-appraisal of what is needed to make a difference?
- Have there been any previous multi-disciplinary assessments that have informed and guided planning in meeting the child's needs? What has changed since that assessment was done?
- Is there evidence that school staff have consulted with outside professionals e.g. EPs, Specialist Teacher Advisors, etc.? How far has their advice been implemented and has this been given a sufficient chance to work? Is there evidence that the outcomes of these actions have been reviewed jointly with those outside professionals, and is there agreement about the next steps?
- Has the school made effective use of all the services available, e.g. outreach? Is evidence available to show that they have made a difference in the child's learning and other circumstances, e.g. behaviour? What other available services could be provided quickly to schools and without waiting for statutory assessment to enable them to increase the level and impact of their intervention?
- Has the child/young person and their parents been consulted – what are their views as far as can be ascertained?
- Are the resources that have been put in place so far of sufficient quality and quantity for the child's SEN to be met? Is there evidence that there have been some returns from additional SEN funding? In proportion to the funds allocated, what evidence is there to show progress?
- Would greater involvement from Social Care or the Health Service be beneficial in this instance? Is a coordinated multi-agency response required?
- Is an out-city placement required, or are there local options that have not been explored. What additional support could enable the child/young person to remain in local maintained provision?

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS PANEL – GUIDANCE FOR REPRESENTATIVES

When the Panel is discussing a proposed statement, a request for additional resources or a change of placement, the headteacher of the school currently attended by the child may attend the discussion or send a representative. Other professionals involved in a case may also attend.

Due to the number of cases the Panel deals with, it is essential that the available time is used as effectively as possible. Therefore all relevant information should be included in the paperwork submitted to Panel. The role of the school representative is to clarify factual issues in relation to the paperwork, and to respond to any questions from the Panel regarding any recent developments. They will not be required to provide a history of the case or to present an argument in support of the issue under discussion, as all the necessary information should be available from the paperwork. It is important for consistency and transparency that the Panel makes its decision based on clear written evidence and with reference to agreed criteria

Below are examples of the type of questions that Panel members may consider when making decisions:

- Is there evidence of purposeful, systematic and structured teaching and intervention over a period of time? If so, what progress has the child made? What do the records and reports tell us about the quality and effectiveness of intervention? If there are gaps, what are these and how can they be addressed? Have there been IEP reviews and has each of these led to a re-evaluation and re-appraisal of what is needed to make a difference?
- Is there evidence that school staff have consulted with outside professionals e.g. EPs, Specialist Teacher Advisors, etc.? How far has their advice been implemented and has this been given a sufficient chance to work? Is there evidence that the outcomes of these actions have been reviewed jointly with those outside professionals, and is there agreement about the next steps?
- Has the school made effective use of all the services available, e.g. outreach? Is evidence available to show that they have made a difference in the child's learning and other circumstances, e.g. behaviour? What other available services could be provided quickly to schools and without waiting for statutory assessment to enable them to increase the level and impact of their intervention?
- Are the resources that have been put in place so far of sufficient quality and quantity for the child's SEN to be met? Is there evidence that there have been some returns from additional SEN funding? In proportion to the funds allocated, what evidence is there to show progress?
- Have there been any previous multi-disciplinary assessments that have informed and guided planning in meeting the child's needs? What has changed since that assessment was done?
- Has the child/young person and their parents been consulted – what are their views as far as can be ascertained?