



EHCP SUPPORT SERIES

Chapter 4

Gathering Evidence

What Should I Include?

A practical guide to choosing useful evidence, showing patterns over time and organising information without feeling that every document must be included.

Evidence should help tell the story

Useful evidence helps explain your child's needs, what support has been tried, the difference that support has made and where needs remain. A smaller set of relevant, readable evidence can often communicate more clearly than a large bundle with no explanation.



What Counts as Useful Evidence?

Evidence is not limited to diagnoses or formal reports. During an EHC needs assessment, the local authority gathers information about education, health and care needs, outcomes and the provision that may be required. Existing advice can be used where it is current and everyone concerned agrees it is sufficient (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015, paras 9.45-9.47).

Education records

SEN support plans, Assess-Plan-Do-Review records, attainment or progress information, examples of work, attendance information and notes about adjustments.

Professional evidence

Educational psychology, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, paediatrics, CAMHS or other relevant assessments and reports.

Parent/carer evidence

Your observations, timelines, examples from home, communication with school and information about the impact of education on daily life.

Child or young person's views

Their experiences, preferences, aspirations and views, communicated in a way that works for them.

Other relevant information

Social care information, behaviour or incident records, exclusion/suspension information, medical evidence or evidence from other services where relevant.

Key fact

The Children and Families Act defines an EHC needs assessment as an assessment of a child or young person's educational, health care and social care needs. Evidence may therefore come from more than one part of their life (Great Britain, 2014, s.36).



Show the Pattern, Not Just the Paperwork

A document is most useful when it helps answer a question. Try to think about what each piece of evidence demonstrates rather than collecting documents simply because they exist.

What are the needs?

Evidence that describes communication, learning, sensory, physical, emotional, social or other SEND-related needs.

What has already been tried?

Support plans, interventions, adjustments, specialist advice and records showing how support has been implemented.

What was the impact?

Progress data, observations, attendance, distress, participation, independence or examples showing whether support has been enough.

What remains difficult?

Evidence of needs that continue despite support, or provision that may need to be more specialist, consistent or individualised.

What works?

Examples showing the conditions, approaches, communication methods or adjustments under which your child is better able to access education.

Study note

The SEND Code of Practice describes a graduated approach in which schools assess need, plan support, put it in place and review its impact. Records from this cycle can help show both what has been tried and how the child or young person has responded (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015).



Choosing What to Include

You do not necessarily need to send every report, email or school record you have. Prioritise evidence that is relevant, current enough to be useful and adds something meaningful to the picture.

Ask these questions about each item

Does it identify or describe a need?

A report may explain the nature, frequency or impact of a difficulty.

Does it show support already provided?

This may include adjustments, intervention records or specialist recommendations.

Does it show impact over time?

Look for patterns in progress, attendance, participation, distress or independence.

Does it add something new?

Several documents repeating the same point may be less useful than one clear document plus a short summary.

Is it understandable without extra context?

If not, add a brief note explaining why you have included it.

In practice

If an older report still describes an important need, you can include it and explain what remains relevant now. Equally, a recent report is not automatically useful if it does not address the needs or support you are trying to evidence.



Organising Your Evidence

A simple structure can make a large amount of information easier for both you and the reader to navigate. You can keep the originals separately and create a smaller evidence pack for the EHCP process.

1. Create a short evidence list

Write the document title, author/service and date. Numbering the documents can make them easier to refer to.

2. Group similar evidence

For example: education, health, professional reports, attendance, parent/carer information and child/young person's views.

3. Highlight the purpose

Add one sentence beside each item: "This shows..." or "I have included this because...".

4. Keep a simple timeline

A chronology can help show when needs emerged, support changed or difficulties increased.

5. Keep your own copy

Save exactly what you submit, including your evidence list and any covering explanation.

Practical tip

Use file names that make sense at a glance, such as '2026-03 Educational Psychology Report' rather than a string of numbers. Clear organisation does not make the evidence stronger legally, but it can make the information easier to follow.



Evidence From Everyday Life

Some needs are difficult to capture in a short appointment or classroom observation. Parent/carer evidence can help show what happens before school, after school, during transitions and in other environments.

Short factual examples

Record what happened, the context, what support was needed and the impact. Avoid feeling that you need to write an essay each time.

Patterns rather than isolated moments

A simple diary over a limited period may show recurring fatigue, distress, sleep disruption, sensory overload, recovery time or difficulty attending.

Communication from school

Relevant emails or meeting notes can help evidence concerns, adjustments, reduced timetables, incidents or changes in support.

What happens after demands

If a child appears to cope in one setting but needs significant recovery afterwards, describe this clearly and factually.

Positive evidence too

Examples of when support works can help show what conditions enable participation, regulation, learning or communication.

Keep it proportionate

You do not need to document every difficult day. A focused sample that shows a repeated pattern, alongside other evidence, may be easier to understand and less exhausting to maintain.



Build My Evidence List

Use this page to decide what you already have, what each item shows and whether there are any important gaps. You can type directly into the boxes.

Education evidence I already have

Professional or health reports I already have

Attendance, participation or progress evidence

Parent/carer and child/young person evidence

Evidence I may still need to request or locate



Final Evidence Check

Before submitting your evidence, check the pack as a whole. The aim is not to prove that your child is struggling enough; it is to provide relevant information that helps decision-makers understand needs, support and impact.

- ☐ Does the evidence cover the main areas of need I have described?
- ☐ Can the reader see what support has already been tried?
- ☐ Is there evidence of the impact of support - including where it has helped?
- ☐ Have I included information about needs that remain or support that is still required?
- ☐ Are the child or young person's views represented in an accessible way?
- ☐ Have I explained why older or less obvious documents are relevant?
- ☐ Have I removed unnecessary duplicates and kept a copy of everything submitted?

Remember

The local authority has its own duties to seek advice and information during an EHC needs assessment. Your evidence pack can help identify relevant needs and existing information, but you are not expected to carry out the statutory assessment yourself.



References & Further Support

About this guide

This resource concerns the SEND/EHCP system in **England**. It provides educational information rather than individual legal advice. Current statutory guidance should be checked when acting in a specific case.

Harvard references

Department for Education and Department of Health (2015) *Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years*. London: Department for Education. Available at: GOV.UK (Accessed: 22 September 2026).

Great Britain (2014) *Children and Families Act 2014*. London: The Stationery Office. See Part 3, section 36.

Department for Education (2025) *The four broad areas of need*. Help for Early Years Providers. Available at: GOV.UK (Accessed: 22 September 2026).

Further support

- **SENDIASS** - free and impartial SEND information, advice and support. Find your local service through your council or Local Offer.
- **GOV.UK SEND Code of Practice** - statutory guidance on EHC needs assessments and the advice local authorities should seek.
- **Your local authority's Local Offer** - local EHCP guidance, forms, processes and contact details.

Next in the series

Chapter 5: Understanding the Sections of an EHCP - a plain-English walkthrough of Sections A-K, what belongs in each section and why the links between needs, outcomes and provision matter.