

Self-Help Guide for Families

We have produced this self-help guide to answer a few of our most common enquiries from families. If you require further support, please contact our telephone advice line on 020 7275 6036 or email sendiags@learningtrust.co.uk.

My child is not being supported at school. What can I do?

- Speak to the SENCO regarding your concerns
- Speak to the Head, if not possible to speak to SENCO
- Check if your child is on the SEN register and that the school is aware of your child's SEN
- Request your child's support plan from the school to understand what is in place.
- If you have a concern about your child's educational progress in school, make an appointment with the Educational Psychology Parents Advice Service. You will be able to discuss your concerns with a qualified educational psychologist who will be able to offer further advice and guidance:
<https://www.hackneylocaloffer.co.uk/kb5/hackney/localoffer/service.page?id=xAjcg1YWf18&localofferchannel=0>
- Make a record of all the events for your own use and keep this updated. It will be a useful source of information.
- Think about what the school is doing well, what the concerns are, how support could be improved and what you would like the outcome to be.
- Organise a meeting with SENCO. Have your list of concerns / improvements ready with you at the meeting so that the meeting is as focused as possible.
- If your child has an Education Health and Care Plan, read the plan and check the needs and provisions are still relevant and working well. If the plan is no longer suitable, you may want to call an early annual review. Speak to your plan co-ordinator about this. You can find out who your child's plan co-ordinator is by contacting SEND Business Support on 0208 820 7000 / option 4 or SEnDBusinessSupport@learningtrust.co.uk.
- Look at the Parents Guide to SEND <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-guide-for-parents-and-carers>
- Look at the SEND Code of Practice <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

I want to make a parental request for an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment. How can I do this?

- Discuss your concerns with the SENCO and what you plan to do. You may be at a point where the school do not feel that an education health and care needs assessment is required.
- Look at our leaflets about Education Health and Care Needs Assessment and Education Health and Care Plans which can be found here <https://hackneysendiags.co.uk/resource-library/>

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- Look at the Parent's Guide to SEND <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-guide-for-parents-and-carers>
- Look at the SEND Code of Practice <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>
- The IPSEA website has a useful section on Education Health and Care needs assessments and plans <https://www.ipsea.org.uk/pages/category/education-health-and-care-plans>
- Look at the parental request form.
- Look at the parental request prompt questions.
- Fill in the parental needs assessment request form as much as you can and follow the instructions on the form to submit to Hackney Learning Trust.

My child has been excluded. What can I do?

- Persistent challenging behaviour could be a sign of unmet need. Please keep talking to your child's teachers and SENCO about what can be done to support your child's needs and what has led to the exclusion. Can you find out what the triggers for behaviour are? Can you discuss with school how the needs arising from SEN are being supported? What strategies are being used? What resources does your child have available to him/her when it is getting too much? Is there a member of staff to talk to? Is there a room he/she can go to? Are all the staff members aware that your child has additional needs? The school should produce a 'one-page profile' that all staff should be aware of so they can accommodate the need and use appropriate teaching strategies. Essentially, are the school making reasonable adjustments? What are they? How are the school anticipating the need and making sure your child is able to access education just like his/her peers. Keep asking any questions you want to know the answers to. You can talk to teachers, SENCO or the Head. You are also able to write to the board of governors if you are not happy with the responses from SENCO / Head.
- A reduced timetable is a type of exclusion. Ask the SENCO or Head why this decision has been made and what steps are being taken to make sure they readmit your child full-time e.g. a plan to build up attendance.
- You should have been given a letter by the Head explaining the length of the exclusion and the reason for the exclusion. If you do not have this, ask for this. The official letter will give you the right to appeal. Only the Head is able to exclude. If the school do not provide you with the official exclusion letter, you are legally entitled to send your child back to school.
- The school should provide suitable work for your child while they are out of school. If they have not done so, you will need to ask for this.
- Have a look at the local offer exclusions page and Hackney Learning Trust Exclusion service page for further information.
<https://www.hackneylocaloffer.co.uk/kb5/hackney/localoffer/advice.page?id=ZrQ0rRdcL-U>
<https://www.learningtrust.co.uk/content/exclusions>
- Look at the IPSEA website exclusion section
<https://www.ipsea.org.uk/pages/category/exclusion-from-school>
- Look at your school's SEND policy and other school policies such as bullying and behaviour to make sure they comply with regulations.

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- You can write to the Headteacher to appeal the exclusion and to reconsider the exclusion detailing the reasons why the exclusion is unnecessary, setting this in the context of the law and the school's own policies.
- You can write to the SEND governors to appeal the decision
- If your child has EHCP, read the plan and check the needs and provisions are still relevant and working well. If not you may want to call an early annual review. Speak to your plan co-ordinator about this. You can find out who your child's plan co-ordinator is by contacting SEND business support on 0208 820 7000 / option 4 or SENDBusinessSupport@learningtrust.co.uk.
- Look at the Exclusions Guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion>
- Look at the Parents Guide to SEND <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-guide-for-parents-and-carers>
- Look at the SEND Code of Practice <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

I would like to make a complaint about my child's school. How can I do this?

- Have you spoken to the school SENCO and / or the Headteacher? First speak to the relevant member of staff involved, raising the issues you are facing. This may be in person, over the phone or in writing. In some cases, issues can be resolved at this stage without going down a more formal route.
- Make a record of all the events for your own use and keep this updated. It will be a useful source of information.
- Think about what the school is doing well, what it is not doing well and what outcome you would like to see.
- Look at your schools complaints policy, this must be followed first.
- Look at all the relevant school policies, for example SEND, Equality, Behaviour, Exclusions so you can set your complaint in context.
- Draft a written complaint - think about what you would like the school to do to improve the situation, as well as expressing how the school has fallen short.
- Child Law Advice has a useful section with advice about making complaints: <https://childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/complaints-to-schools/>.
- Look at Hackney Learning Trust complaints policy to understand the next steps if you have exhausted the school's procedure <https://www.learningtrust.co.uk/content/complaints-procedure>
- Look at the Parents Guide to SEND <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-guide-for-parents-and-carers>
- Look at the SEND Code of Practice <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>
- If you have serious concerns about your school which cannot wait for the formal procedures to be completed, you can contact Ofsted for further advice. The contacts are listed on this page: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>

I would like to appeal a decision by the local authority. How can I do this?

- Read the decision letter carefully before deciding to appeal.
- You must consider mediation before appealing. Please contact KIDS mediation for advice <https://www.kids.org.uk/mediation-info>
- Please see these videos explaining how the tribunal works: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLORVvk_w75PxU3wF72j3jLYqGqISyMhZ4
- The IPSEA website outlines how the tribunal works: <https://www.ipsea.org.uk/appealing-to-the-send-tribunal>
- This is the government website with all the relevant forms <https://www.gov.uk/courts-tribunals/first-tier-tribunal-special-educational-needs-and-disability>
- Keep your plan co-ordinator informed of what you intend to do.
- Fill in the form as fully as you are able and submit according to the instructions.

How do I request information from the school?

- Decide what specific information you would like.
- Send an email to the SENCO or Head requesting the information you would like to see for example, your child's records, support plan or whichever information you would like.
- Consider requesting a meeting where you can speak to the SENCO and find out what information is held about your child and what support is in place.
- *If your child attends a local authority school* - If the school is not cooperative, you can formally write to the chair of the governing board under the Pupil Information Regulations and they should provide you with a copy of your child's records within 15 school days.
- *If your child attends an academy or independent school* – If the school is not cooperative, you can request your child's records under the Data Protection Act. They should be provided to you by 40 calendar days and they may charge a fee.
- Please have a look at the Child Law Advice website for more information <https://childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/access-to-information/>.

How can I apply for transport?

- You can find more information about transport and how to apply here <https://www.hackneylocaloffer.co.uk/kb5/hackney/localoffer/advice.page?id=XATR8-VsbNE>.
- Download the form and complete and submit the form according to the instructions.

Where can I go for help filling out DLA / Housing / other forms?

Hackney SENDIAGS is unable to directly support in completing forms but we are able to signpost you to the following Services for information and support:

- Hackney Ark Resource Centre: 020 7014 7005 <https://www.hackneylocaloffer.co.uk/kb5/hackney/localoffer/service.page?id=T0eNzYjPu58>
- Hackney Community Law Centre 020 8985 8364 <https://hclc.org.uk/how-we-can-help-you/>

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- Hackney Citizens Advice Bureau 0344 499 1195
<https://www.hackneylocaloffer.co.uk/kb5/hackney/localoffer/service.page?id=T0atARnx5-E>
- Hackney Advice Service 020 7001 1728
- Carers Centre 020 8533 0951 <https://www.hackneycarers.org.uk/get-support>
- Contact www.contact.org.uk / 0808 808 3555 / helpline@contact.org.uk

I am interested in Elective Home Education. Where can I find out more?

- Please have a look at the Learning Trust page where you will find the elective home education policy and further contact details
<https://www.learningtrust.co.uk/content/elective-home-education>
- We advise you *do not choose home education as a way of resolving disputes* with the school or feel pressurised into making this choice, as you will be deemed to be making your own 'alternative arrangements' and this allows the school / local authority to relinquish support for your child's education. For example, you will have to pay for your child to sit exams and find a suitable venue, you will not be entitled to any educational psychology assessments or other assessments and would have to pay for these privately.
- If your child has an EHC plan you will need to demonstrate your ability to meet their needs as the duty to educate your child sits with the Local Authority.

How do I apply for a school? What is the admissions process?

If your child is on SEN support, you will need to follow the usual procedures for all children. Details can be found on the Learning Trust's website:

Nursery <https://www.learningtrust.co.uk/content/nursery-before-you-apply?guidebook=187>

Primary <https://www.learningtrust.co.uk/content/primary-before-you-apply?guidebook=188>

Secondary <https://www.learningtrust.co.uk/content/secondary-before-you-apply?guidebook=189>

If your child has an Education Health and Care plan, please look at the local offer for more information and contact your plan co-ordinator for any specific questions:

Primary

<https://www.hackneylocaloffer.co.uk/kb5/hackney/localoffer/advice.page?id=kLRQzPesuLA>

Secondary

<https://www.hackneylocaloffer.co.uk/kb5/hackney/localoffer/advice.page?id=buadqqFKFfQ>

My child will be absent from school medium to long term due to illness (including mental illness). What should I do?

- Please call to discuss your child's condition with the school in the first instance. They may be able to support you. Keep the school informed at all times.
- You will need to provide medical evidence to the school if your child is absent for a significant period of time.
- If your child cannot attend school for a medical reason, this includes emotional reasons such as high anxiety, for 15 days or more, they should be referred by the school to the home

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tuition service. You must have supporting medical evidence. More information can be found here <https://www.learningtrust.co.uk/content/home-tuition> and <https://www.hackneylocaloffer.co.uk/kb5/hackney/localoffer/service.page?id=KcRNbiUFywE&localofferchannel=0>.

- Please also look at the IPSEA website sections on children out of school <https://www.ipsea.org.uk/pages/category/children-out-of-school>.
- If your child is finding it difficult to attend school, you may also find this website useful <https://notfineinschool.org.uk/>.

How do I request support from you at a meeting?

- Please think about how you would like the service to support you. Think about what you want to say at the meeting and what actions you would like to see from the meeting.
- Please contact our advice line or email to explain what is needed and give us as much notice as possible of the meeting.
- A member of the team will respond to offer support by phone or email initially. This may be providing further information or offering support over the phone about your situation and helping you to prepare for the meeting.
- It may not always be possible to attend the meeting due to clashes with existing meetings. Where this is the case a team member can talk through what you would like to get out of the meeting and discuss particular questions you may want to ask or actions you would like to result from the meeting.
- If you need an interpreter, the school should book this for you.

Where else can I get advice and support?

- Hackney Local Offer www.hackneylocaloffer.co.uk
- Contact www.contact.org.uk / 0808 808 3555 / helpline@contact.org.uk
- Independent Provider of Special Education Advice (IPSEA) www.ipsea.org.uk
- SOS!SEN www.sossen.org.uk / 0208 538 373
- Ace Education www.ace-ed.org.uk/advice-about-education-for-parents / 0300 0115 142
- Scope www.scope.org.uk
- National Autistic Society www.autism.org.uk/services/helplines
- Autism Education Trust <https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/for-parents/>
- Hackney Citizen's Advice Bureau <https://www.hackneylocaloffer.co.uk/kb5/hackney/localoffer/service.page?id=T0atARnx5-E>
- Carers Centre <https://www.hackneycarers.org.uk/get-support>
- Just for Kids Law <https://justforkidslaw.org/>
- Kids Mediation <https://www.kids.org.uk/london-mediation>
- Hackney Ark Resource Centre <https://www.hackneylocaloffer.co.uk/kb5/hackney/localoffer/service.page?id=T0eNzYjPu58>
- Coram Children's Legal Centre <https://childlawadvice.org.uk/>
- Hackney Community Law Centre 020 8985 8364 <https://hclc.org.uk/how-we-can-help-you/>
- Queen Mary Legal Advice Centre <http://www.lac.qmul.ac.uk/>

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I am feeling overwhelmed dealing with my child's needs. I need some support for me. Where can I find help?

- NHS <https://talkchanges.org.uk/>
- Scope Navigate Service <https://www.scope.org.uk/family-services/navigate/>
- City & Hackney Carer's Centre Listening Ear <https://www.hackneycarers.org.uk/listening-ear>
- Family Action <https://www.family-action.org.uk/what-we-do/children-families/familyline/>
- Family Lives <https://www.familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help/confidential-helpline/>
- As1 parent support group
https://www.hackneylocaloffer.co.uk/kb5/hackney/localoffer/service.page?id=EaAXXJOIoTQ&localofferchannel=4_11
- Autism Coffee mornings
https://www.hackneylocaloffer.co.uk/kb5/hackney/localoffer/service.page?id=b1nVdD6AMKw&localofferchannel=4_11
- CAMHS coffee morning
https://www.hackneylocaloffer.co.uk/kb5/hackney/localoffer/service.page?id=2ct0F2fSLqo&localofferchannel=4_11