



Lincolnshire Parent Carer Forum

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Feedback from the Head of Service SEND

Parents Voice Report July – Sept 25

Page 11 – EHC Hours

Thank you for raising your concerns about how support is described in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). I want to reassure you that hours of support are not being removed from EHCPs as a way to reduce or withdraw support. Instead, as a local authority, we are moving away from blanket statements such as “1:1 support for X hours” and towards plans that are more tailored to each child’s individual needs and strengths.

Why the change

- The previous approach, which focused on specifying a set number of hours, often led to a narrow view of what support should look like and could unintentionally foster dependency on adult support, rather than helping children develop the skills and independence they need to thrive.
- By moving to a needs-led model, EHCPs now detail the child’s specific needs, strengths, and the strategies and provisions required to help them make progress towards their outcomes. This means support is more flexible and can be adapted to meet your child’s needs throughout the school day or year.

What does this mean in practice

- Adult support is still provided where required but is now described as a means to facilitate learning and skill development, not as an end in itself.
- For example, instead of stating “15 hours of 1:1 support,” an EHCP might specify:
 - “A teaching assistant will deliver daily small group sessions to develop independent learning skills, with progress reviewed weekly.”
 - “A visual timetable and structured routines will be implemented for all transitions, with a designated adult providing guidance at each transition point.”
 - “The child will use a laptop with speech-to-text software for all written tasks in English and Humanities lessons.”
 - “The child will participate in a social skills group every Tuesday and Thursday, led by the SENCO.”
 - “The child will have scheduled sensory breaks at 10:30am and 1:30pm each day, supervised by a member of staff.”
 - “A key adult will meet with the child at the start and end of each school day to review the day’s plan and address any concerns.”

- “Tasks will be scaffolded and differentiated in Maths and Science lessons, with the teaching assistant providing direct support during these sessions.”
- “The child will practise communication skills during morning registration and lunchtime, with staff modelling and prompting specific strategies.”

The positives of a needs-led approach:

- It encourages schools to focus on building your child’s independence and confidence, rather than creating reliance on adult support.
- It gives schools the flexibility to respond to your child’s needs in a timely and effective way, while ensuring provision is clearly specified and accountable.
- It helps prepare children and young people for adulthood by developing the skills they need to succeed beyond school.
- It allows for a more creative and holistic approach to support, recognising that children’s needs can change and that progress is not always linear.

We understand that this change can feel unsettling, especially when you want to be sure your child’s needs are met. Please be assured that the aim is to provide better, more personalised support not less. If you have concerns about how your child’s support is being delivered, you can always discuss this with the school or your SEND caseworker.

Page 13 – Types of school

Thank you for sharing your experiences and concerns about finding the right educational setting for your child. We recognise the deep frustration many families feel, especially when academically able autistic children with severe anxiety struggle to find suitable placements. Your feedback is vital and has directly informed our ongoing work to improve SEND provision across Lincolnshire.

Current Challenges

Like many areas nationally, Lincolnshire is experiencing a significant rise in the number of children and young people needing specialist support. Requests for Education, Health and Care (EHC) Needs Assessments have increased by over 50% in the last three years, and the number of children with EHC plans is now well above the national average. Despite substantial investment, demand for special school and alternative provision placements continue to outstrip available places.

Over the last 5 years Lincolnshire have committed over £100,000 capital funding to develop over 540 new specialist school places. The councils commitment has not wavered, and further investment is supported to further expand the capacity in our special school estate by developing special school satellites to accommodate the post 16 cohorts. In doing so the strategy is to prepare and support both students and parents to gradually move away from the special school community, preparing them for their next destination as well as supporting the PFA agenda.

Additionally, the new Better Belonging strategy has secured funding to:

- Develop new SEND Hubs within mainstream schools.
- A new 154-place SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health) Free School has been approved, and we are working with the Department for Education to progress this as quickly as possible.

The aim of the strategy is to develop more localised provisions so that children and young people can be educated in their local communities fostering a culture of belonging and avoiding the need to transport children and young people across the county over long distances.

Despite these efforts, the pace of demand continues to exceed the rate at which new places can be created. This means that, at times, families may face delays or limited options, particularly for highly specialist or SEMH settings. We know this is not acceptable, and we are committed to doing more.

SEMH School: We understand that parents may feel anxious about the prospect of their child with SEND and additional vulnerabilities attending a SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health) specialist school and may worry that this could leave their child more vulnerable. We want to reassure you that SEMH schools are designed to be highly supportive, nurturing environments, with a strong focus on building relationships, trust, and emotional safety.

While it is natural to worry about vulnerability, SEMH schools are specifically set up to support children who may have experienced challenges in other settings. The nurturing ethos, small class sizes, and high staff-to-pupil ratios mean that children receive close attention and support. Staff are skilled at recognising and responding to individual needs, and safeguarding is always a top priority.

SEMH schools are not just about managing behaviour they are about helping children heal, grow, and thrive. The focus is on developing the whole child, building trusting relationships, and supporting each young person to achieve their best possible outcomes in a safe and caring environment.

Looking Ahead

We know there is still much to do. The Council remains fully committed to increasing sufficiency, improving quality, and ensuring that every child and young person with SEND can access the right support, in the right place, at the right time.

If you have specific questions about placements, or need support navigating the system, please contact your SEND caseworker or the SEND team. We are here to help and will continue to update families as new provision becomes available.

Thank you for sharing your experience and for raising such important questions about Elective Home Education (EHE) and support for children who are struggling to access mainstream school due to SEND and mental health needs.

The situation described is not uncommon, and many families in Lincolnshire and beyond are facing similar challenges especially when a child's needs do not seem to fit neatly into existing categories, or when anxiety and mental health make school attendance difficult.

If your child has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and you choose to educate them at home (EHE), it's important to understand how responsibilities are shared:

Parental Choice and Financial Responsibility:

In most cases, EHE is a parental choice. This means that parents take on the responsibility for organising and funding their child's education, including any resources, tuition, or specialist support needed at home. The local authority is not required to provide funding for elective home education, and parents are expected to ensure that the education provided is suitable for their child's age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs.

Local Authority's Duty to Ensure Provision:

The local authority remains responsible for ensuring that the provision set out in your child's EHCP is delivered, even if your child is home educated. However, the way this is achieved depends on the circumstances:

- If EHE is chosen by parents and the LA agrees that the education provided at home is suitable and meets the needs outlined in the EHCP, the LA will review the EHCP at least annually. They will ask for information about your child's progress and may request to see examples of work or meet with you and your child.
- The LA will not routinely provide therapies, specialist teaching, or additional funding for EHE, unless it has been agreed that home education is the only way to meet your child's needs (this is rare and usually formalised as EOTAS – Education Otherwise Than At School).
- If the LA believes that the provision at home is not suitable or that your child's needs are not being met, they may work with you to identify alternative options, which could include a return to school or additional support.

Annual Review Process:

The EHCP must be reviewed at least once a year. The LA will contact you to arrange the review, discuss your child's progress, and ensure that the provision remains appropriate. You will be asked to contribute your views, and the LA may seek input from professionals involved with your child.

EOTAS (Education Otherwise Than At School):

In **exceptional** cases, if it is agreed that school is **not suitable** and the LA names EOTAS in the EHCP, the LA becomes responsible for arranging and funding the provision set out

in the plan. This is different from EHE, where the financial responsibility remains with parents.

In summary:

- If you choose EHE, you take on the responsibility for funding and delivering your child's education, but the LA must still ensure your child's needs are being met as described in the EHCP.
- The LA will monitor progress through annual reviews and may offer advice or support but will not usually provide funding or direct provision unless EOTAS is agreed.

If you are struggling, or if you feel pressured to make decisions quickly about EHE, please reach out to Liaise for guidance or contact your SEND caseworker for some advice.