

Step 1 Assessment of Need, Diagnosis and Professional Reports

Assessment of Need

If a parent or guardian believes that their child may have a disability, they may [apply](#) to the Health Service Executive to carry out an assessment of their health needs arising from their disability. Any child or young adult born after June 1st, 2002 is eligible to apply for an assessment, regardless of age.

[The Disability Act 2005](#) legally requires the [Health Service Executive](#) to carry out the assessment of need. There are strict time limits for completion of assessments. The Disability Act 2005 says the assessment of need shall determine whether child has a disability, shall determine the nature and extent of disability, shall state the health and education needs, shall state the services the child needs and shall state when and for how long the services should be provided.

Note: *HSE policy currently says "the assessment of need is a short screening assessment, that it is not a diagnostic assessment"*

Part 2 of the HSE assessment of need process is the service statement. Based on the assessment of need the HSE must prepare a Service Statement. The service statement sets out the health service intervention the child will receive. The HSE Service Statement will **not** mention any educational services; the HSE will identify the educational needs of the child but will not identify the educational supports required to meet that need.

Professional Reports

Professional reports which identify the needs of the child and /or diagnose disability may also be sought from other services or professionals. Where you might seek the report will depend on the age and the educational and support needs of the child. Examples include:

- Professionals working for an HSE or independently funded disability service (if available in your locality),
- The National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS), for children already attending school, service accessed through the school
- The HSE Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services CAMHS or
- Psychologists or therapists who work privately (for a fee).

When is a diagnosis of disability or a professional report needed?

For mainstream school and mainstream classes?

A [new model for allocating Special Education Teachers](#) to mainstream schools was introduced in September 2017. Children **do not** have to be diagnosed with a particular condition to qualify for extra teaching assistance. The new model gives greater freedom to schools to give extra teaching help to the pupils who most need it, regardless of their diagnosis. But diagnosis can be helpful in providing indications that may be helpful in planning how to meet Special Educational Needs. Where a parent has an assessment for their child which notes that they have a particular special educational need, or disability, they should still bring this to the attention of the school, as it may assist the school to decide how best to support the child.

For special classes and special education schools?

The NCSE says that in order to access a special class a student must have a report from a relevant professional or team of professionals (for example, psychologist, speech and language therapist, psychiatrist) stating that:

1. She or he has a disability (in line with the designation of the special class in question) and

2. She or he has complex or severe learning needs that require the support of a special class setting and the reasons why this is the case.

The professional report must meet DES requirements for the particular disability in question. Under no circumstances should a school place a student in a special class without such a professional report.

[Guidelines for Setting Up and Organising Special Classes for Boards of Management and Principals of Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#)

For parents and guardians?

As a parent, if you have a psychological or other professional report on your child, it will give you clarity regarding your child's situation and will be of assistance to you as you make decisions about school places and supports. Decisions about educational placement, services or supports are made by the school and the NCSE in consultation with the child's parents or guardians.