

Annual Reviews- process and Guidance Feedback, update January 2023

This is a summary of frequently asked questions, and responses, received from schools who have helpfully fed back their concerns about the revised Annual Review process.

If you have any further questions or concerns, you may like to book a slot at the SENDCo drop-ins with the SEND Statutory Assessment Team. These can be booked using the following link: [SENDCo Bi-Weekly Drop-In Session \(office365.com\)](https://www.office365.com)

Details of upcoming dates have been shared at the SENCo Forum in the autumn term of 2022 and future dates will be communicated through the SEND Newsletter on a monthly basis.

There were five main broad areas of feedback and queries:

- A. Child/young person/Parent/Carer views and personalisation
- B. Statutory requirements
- C. The forms
- D. The timing of Annual Review meetings and difficulties with arranging them
- E. The Flow Chart/managing the work, timelines and time constraints

N.B.: In the comments below, reference is made to numbered points and page numbers. These relate to the original draft documents sent out in the summer and will no longer align with the current documents.

A. The child, young person and Parents/carers views and personalisation

1. ***'Child/ young person's voice for AR – would be nice to see how other schools do this maybe some way of sharing this? The form attached is a great but not useful for children who are younger/ non-verbal'.***

This is about personalisation. Since the documents and process were first shared with schools, additional guidance has been provided on personalisation which can be found here:

https://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/person-centred_approaches_guide_for_schools-setting_sept_2022.pdf

Parents and children/young people's views can be gathered in all sorts of ways, such as verbally or by drawing pictures.

2. ***'The form for parents is much better – clear expectations. I wonder if it is possible to get them in different languages – particularly some of the***

more prominent languages in the borough – as a way of making families feel more able to access?’

Thank you for this feedback. The form was coproduced with the Parent Carer Forum. Having this in different languages is something that we can look at. In the meantime schools can use translation services if they choose to, although would also need a version in English so that LA and other staff can access it, or they can gather parents information in different ways, such as through discussion with the support of an interpreter if necessary.

B. Statutory requirements

3. ***‘Submitting evidence so far in advance of an annual review seems unnecessary and I can’t see what the point of that is’.***

Please see Code of Practice 9:176, second bullet point, SEND Regulations Schedule 20(4)

4. ***‘Sending the documents within 2 weeks means that no annual reviews can be held in the last week of any term or half term.’***

Please see Code of Practice 9:176, 4th bullet point, SEND Regulations Schedule 20(9).

You can send the documents to us and attendees before you break up. To help with this, some schools like to type straight onto the Report of the Annual Review, the purpose of which is to serve as a record of the Annual Review meeting. The documents can be sent out the same day or the next day, and certainly within that week.

The entire process and what we are asking you to do, when and how aligns with the legislation. This is particularly the case in regards to the gathering of information, distribution of information, and the purpose of the Annual Review meeting, how this must be recorded and when the Annual Review documents must be sent to the LA and others.

5. ***‘There are a lot of documents here, all with different deadlines - for some schools just keeping track of these will be a full-time job. I will need to seriously consider our systems to manage these effectively.’***

All documents need to comply with the same statutory deadlines:

- Professionals have 6 weeks to provide advice for the Annual Review
- Setting advice and all professional reports must be distributed to all attendees at least 2 weeks before the meeting.
- After the meeting, all the documents must be sent to the LA, parents and all attendees within 10 working days

These are the only statutory deadlines within this process until the documents are sent to the LA. Other deadlines provided in the guidance/flow chart are there to help you to ensure that these statutory deadlines are complied with. This is why we ask that you alert professionals and the LA to the Annual Review meeting at least 8 weeks beforehand, as professionals have a statutory 6 weeks to make any updated assessments and provide you with their report before you circulate it at least 2 weeks before the meeting. If the school does not alert the professionals to the meeting at least 8 weeks beforehand, then there is a considerable risk that those professionals will not be able to provide updated advice in time for the Annual Review meeting.

We recommend that, at the end of the Annual Review meeting, you set the date for the next meeting.

6. *'Summary of health social care needs: We do not track the funding that families receive from DLA / Care allowance this would be a major policy change for us'*

We are not asking you to tell us what allowances are provided from the DWP such as DLA, PIP or Carer's Allowance. We are asking you to provide details of the health and social care needs and provision that need to be in the EHC Plan, because this is a statutory requirement.

The purpose of the Annual Review is to review the content of the whole EHC Plan, including health and social care needs, outcomes and provision. Health and social care practitioners should provide you with updated information in good time for the Annual Review meeting if you alert them at least 8 weeks beforehand, so that you have this available for the Annual Review meeting. This is why it is important- and a statutory requirement- to inform those practitioners about the Annual Review and ask them to provide advice using the advice template in plenty of time before the meeting, even where, as far as you are aware, they are not currently involved with the child.

C. The forms

7. Various comments were received about punctuation and capitalisation, formatting, table proportions, page numbers, consistency on size and spacing of arrows, bold/larger titles etc. All have been addressed and amendments made, thank you

8. *'Does this replace or supplement the current annual review?'*

The Report of the Annual Review replaces the previous Annual Review form. All schools should now use all the new documents and not the previous ones. Some very slight amendments have been made in light of more recent feedback and the documents will shortly be uploaded onto the SENCo area of the website

9. ***'Same amount of space given to name and address and telephone number.'*** Yes, to balance the table and because schools often want to provide more than one telephone number- e.g. the main office number and the direct number of the SENCo.

10. *'Boxes must be kept together on one page.'*

These are WORD documents and very few of the boxes on the forms will stay on the same page once the forms are being completed. They will expand as people write into them.

11. ***'All these documents have a lot of white space with large margins, headers and footers, the number of pages could be significantly reduced with some thoughtful simple adjustments'.***

These are WORD documents. The larger white spaces are to ensure that it is absolutely clear what parts need to be completed and so that specific sections can be easily located to ensure accessibility for all. The white spaces indicate sections that need to be completed and will be filled in when you use the forms. If there remains any excess white space you can remove this if you want to. The sections will expand if you keep typing.

12. ***'The information required looks the same just on separate documents'.***

The information requested from all advice givers is the same. That is why we have a single advice template.

The Report of the Annual Review is different to the professional/school advice templates as it is a record of the meeting, key things that were discussed, recommendations and so on. The design and formatting of forms is the same but the purpose and content is not.

13. ***'I like the report template but that should be all you need from a school. Please try to reduce the workload on SENCOs not increase it.'***

This comment seems to refer to the 'Report of the Annual Review' form. This is different from school advice. They are not the same thing and do not contain exactly the same information. The report of the Annual Review is a document on which the discussion at the meeting is recorded and it is a statutory requirement. School information is different, for example, the Report of the Annual Review does not have a space to provide details of attainment and progression – as you will have already provided this in the school/setting advice.

14. ***Re educational advice-Can the same annual review form not be used as a pre document? With some of these tables put into the top of the annual review form as education complete this anyway.***

The school/setting advice might be termed a 'pre-document' as the school will complete it and distribute it to all invitees at least 2 weeks before the meeting

with all the updated professional advice received. Schools are not asked to provide details of attainment and progression on the Report of the Annual Review- you should have already provided this in the school/setting advice.

The Report of the Annual Review provides a space to record the discussion about the pupil's attainment and progress to be recorded and is a statutory requirement.

15. 'I also think there is too much on the class teachers in terms of the setting advice document – teachers do not have the time to commit to completing this – for some teachers they may have a number of EHCPs in their classes. This level of paperwork is never going to get done and will involve SENCOs spending a lot of time chasing teachers for it. We should be looking at reducing the amount of paperwork for SENCOs and this to me is increasing it.'

This comment seems to come from the suggestion of a 'round robin'. The child's progress needs to be recorded within the school/setting advice, alongside progress over time and attainment data in order to ensure adequate monitoring of progress against their outcomes and to ensure that their SENs are being met. The suggestion of a 'round robin' is nothing more than a suggestion. Many secondary schools use this, or a similar method, for the purpose of the yearly report for example but schools do not have to do this.

If you do gather information from various teachers, you do not have to repeat it all on the school/setting advice form. You should briefly summarise it instead.

Schools can use whatever method they wish to ascertain the child's progress, and can include the SENCo's oversight of the provision being made for children with SEN and the usual monitoring of progress that takes place at least termly when children have their progress against the short term targets in their support plans/IPS reviewed. We are asking you to provide information that by and large should already exist, not to go to a lot of trouble to provide information that you do not already have.

16. 'Am I right in thinking that schools will have to complete 3 documents; Professionals Report, Setting Advice and the Report of Annual Review? I can't see how these formats are saving us time'.

Schools do not need to complete 3 documents. Schools can complete the child's details if they wish to before sending the Professionals form to professionals to complete. But you do not have to complete the child's details- the Professional can do that.

You do need to complete the school/setting advice, just as you would for a new assessment. This records the child's current attainment and progress over time. It is also the place where the school might want to make its own recommendations about changes to needs, outcomes or provision in exactly

the same way as we ask Professionals to do. This is so that Parents have the full range of information about their child to consider in advance of the meeting when you distribute this at least two weeks before the meeting

The Report of the Annual Review is a format to guide and record the discussion at the Annual Review meeting and ensure that all information required is provided. You would need to complete this just as you would make notes of any meeting that the school holds, such as regular reviews of support plans/IEPs or indeed the Annual Review form that you complete now. The Report of the Annual Review is a statutory requirement.

In terms of a lot of paperwork, the paperwork is designed to support schools to comply with the statutory requirements for up-to-date advice from a range of people to be gathered in order to inform the Annual Review- different professionals, the child/young person, parents, carers -and to inform those people and the LA that the Annual Review meeting is taking place and when. There is no expectation that the SENCo sends out all the paperwork him/herself.

The only things that the SENCo will need to complete are the School/setting advice and the Report of the Annual Review- which is essentially a record of the meeting which you would likely have taken notes of in any case and you already complete the current forms for this purpose. The Report of the Annual Review form can be completed electronically at the meeting as you go along which saves time later.

17. *'Does the guidance need to be embedded in the document used to gather professional advice? This takes up between 1/3 and ½ the document and would need to be included for every child'.*

Schools do not complete this document, external professionals do. We have worked with other professional groups to develop and agree this template. Other feedback has indicated that people find it much easier if they have the guidance right in front of them as they need it rather than having to find guidance that is provided separately.

18. *'I need to review the progress towards meeting long term and short term outcomes on the Plan but there are only long term outcomes. Also there are a lot of them- do I have to review progress towards all of them individually?'*

Having listened to feedback from schools, we have just revised the report of the Annual Review form. This now indicates that you should review progress towards meeting outcomes, rather than specifying long term and short term outcomes. Please review progress towards meeting the outcomes in the Plan.

We know that there are still too many outcomes in Plans and are working towards having only 4 or 5. Until we achieve this consistently, please group outcomes in one area together and say whether all of them are met or not. You will already be reviewing progress towards meeting short term outcomes

on targets through reviewing children's support plans and can use this to inform the Report of the Annual Review. Then, you can detail the ones that are not met. For example, you might say 'all of the outcomes in this area of need have been met/partially met except xxxx' and then provide detail about progression towards achieving this outcome.

It may be that you feel, along with the child, young person and family, that a number of outcomes in one particular area of need should be revised to provide one, broader outcome in which case you can make that recommendation.

D. When Annual Review meetings should be held and difficulties arranging them

19. *'We don't currently get a termly update. In some cases, this will fall in the middle of the school holidays, and I don't check my emails every day in the holidays'.*

Schools will get a termly update and have had one this term. It is suggested that, at the end of the Annual Review meeting, the date for the next meeting is set before concluding the meeting. This way, schools will already know which children will need an Annual Review meeting and when.

For children with their very first EHCP, their first Annual Review meeting must be held within 9 months of the date of the Plan, so that the full 12 week Annual Review process can be concluded within 12 months of the Plan being issued. Thereafter, an Annual Review meeting needs to take place within 12 months of the previous meeting.

20. *'Page 3 paragraph 4, Children in Year 6. This is section is confusing. Clearly there is an annual review in Y5. Currently this is the review where targets are set for Y7 + (though this is very challenging for a variety of reasons). We then review in Y6. If the annual review in Y6 is before the secondary school is known, we then need to have another meeting for transition. A child could end up with three reviews in one year. This workload is not sustainable. Please clarify the expectations here.'*

I am sorry that there has been a misunderstanding that schools may end up having 3 Annual Reviews for a child in Year 6. This is not the case and the guidance has been updated in light of this comment.

There is no expectation that outcomes should be set for Year 7 plus at the Year 5 Annual Review. Outcomes are set for the end of the key stage or, if in a year group which is the end of a key stage, for the next key stage. So for children in Year 5, outcomes should be relevant until the end of year 6. For children in Year 6, you should set new outcomes to the end of Year 9 because that is the next key stage.

If you have had an Annual Review meeting for a child in the summer term of Year 5, the next Annual Review meeting will be due in the summer term of Year 6. You can invite the new school to this Annual Review meeting. In this case the child will have had one review in Year 5 and one review in Year 6.

If the child has NOT had an Annual Review meeting in the summer term of Year 5, then they will need to have one in the autumn term of Year 6. The next annual review meeting will then be due in the autumn term of Year 7. In the summer term you may want to have a transition meeting with the family and the new school to aid transition into secondary school, but this does not constitute an Annual Review meeting.

At most, a child in Year 6 might have 2 meetings- an Annual Review meeting in the autumn term to inform phase transfer and set outcomes for the next phase of the child's education, and a meeting with the new school to aid transition.

21. ***'Page 4. Row 2 of the table it states that the meeting cannot happen after the date it is due, however the new timescales for requesting information from all professionals mean that no annual reviews can take place in Autumn 1 and that very few will be able to fit into Autumn 2'.***

'Page 6. The 8 week notice period means that no annual reviews can take place in autumn 1 unless you are expecting SENCOs to give up their holidays'.

This is incorrect and SENCOs are not expected to give up part of their holidays. The summer holidays last 6 weeks. Schools can provide a minimum 8 weeks' notice to practitioners towards the end of the summer term before the autumn term in which the annual review meeting will be held. The 8 weeks' notice is a minimum- but schools can ask for advice before this if necessary.

Schools need to set the Annual Review meeting dates and then work back from there. For example, if a meeting will be held in the second week of the autumn term, schools can gather the advice and distribute it towards the end of the previous summer term.

E. The flow chart/Managing the work/Timelines and time constraints

20. ***'The flow chart is really helpful in terms of seeing the process'.***

Thank you for this comment

21. ***'There is a lot of white space on the Guidance Flowchart - this could fit onto one page. A checklist or tick boxes in the flowchart would help us to track what is happening'.***

Thank you, it is really pleasing to see that some schools are thinking about how they can actively use this as a resource to keep track of what they are doing and to plan the next step.

Unfortunately it has not been possible to put everything all on one page without making the writing so small as to make it difficult to read. We have added a tickbox to each section to help you track progress in the process to prepare for the Annual Review meeting and also provided 2 versions of a Report Audit form- one for an individual child and one for multiple children, which schools may like to use to assist in managing the gathering of required information. Schools do not have to use a Report Audit Form. These have been provided only as an optional resource for schools to use if they think this would be helpful.

The timelines

22. *'Gathering advice 8 weeks before and writing the setting advice 6 weeks before would result in the information being very out of date by the time the review comes around. Schools work on a half termly basis and in a school with a lot of EHCPs where annual reviews are constantly taking place, it would be very hard to manage and keep track of such long term time scales.'*

The advice is not being written or gathered 6-8 weeks before the meeting. It is being *requested*.

It is recommended that, to ensure compliance with the statutory requirement to distribute all updated advice at least 2 weeks before the meeting, schools need to ask advice givers for their advice 8 weeks before the meeting, not gather it from them at this time. Advice givers then have 6 weeks to write their advice and send it to the school. This is a statutory timescale. Some advice givers will be able to do this in a week or two, others might need to take the full 6 weeks. They then need to send it to the school promptly so that school can distribute it at least 2 weeks before the meeting. The maximum amount of time that updated advice would be written would therefore be 8 weeks before the meeting which is not considered to be 'out of date' for the purpose of an Annual Review.

The guidance has been written to align with, and help support compliance with, statutory timescales. It is very important that advice givers are given adequate notice of the Annual Review so that they have time to assess the child and their progress and provide updated reports if necessary. The Report Audit Forms have been developed to assist schools in tracking progress of report gathering in light of this comment, and schools can also use the tick boxes which have now been included in the guidance flowchart to help them manage this.

23. *'As a Sendco we are often chasing reports from other professionals. It would be good for training to occur / info disseminated to other professionals e.g. sharing the flow chart'*

Thank you for this comment. The flowchart/timetable builds in plenty of time for professionals to be informed of the AR meeting and to prepare updated reports if

necessary, and for schools to chase if necessary. We have already met with our partners in health and social care to ensure that they are aware of the requirements so that this process and the design of the documents supports everyone.

24. *'The expectations on SENCOs with this is just too much. For schools with 20+ EHCPs this is just a lot of paperwork, a lot of work and quite frankly I am not sure how I would have the time to do any other work if this is the expectation'*.

We know this can be very challenging. The process aligns with statutory requirements and the guidance is provided to help schools and the LA to comply with the law. Much of the work can be done quite early on, perhaps at the start of the school year.

For example, at the end of the Annual Review meeting, it is helpful for participants to set a date for the next meeting so that everyone knows very early on what timescales they need to work to. Professionals' advice forms are the same for most professionals and often schools have one key practitioner from a professional group working with the children attending. This means that, in September each year, one form can be sent to key services (for example, EP service, health service) with a list of children and the dates that their meetings will be held. If necessary, reminders can be diarised to go out by email to individual practitioners at least 8 weeks before the meeting and can be sent by school admin. This is a suggestion in light of this comment, not a requirement.

25. *'The entire process seems complicated, far too time consuming and essentially makes a SENCOs job about annual reviews and paperwork taking away from early intervention work and supporting teachers and children in school'*.

It can seem more complicated than it is as is often the case with new processes. This is why a step by step guide has been provided. In light of Ofsted's findings in terms of the way we have been managing Annual Reviews, this new process is intended to ensure that schools are supported to comply with statutory requirements.

We have had a number of schools who have fed back that they have found the process much more effective now. We know that the benefits and difficulties of a new process often only become apparent once it is being used. This is why we will ask for further feedback in the summer term 2023 so that we can make any amendments that are needed.

In the meantime we have gratefully received comments about the Report of the Annual Review Form and this has been revised in light of those comments. Thank you.

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SEND Service Manager

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