

## Schools Forum Highlight Report: Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) Service

Highlight Data from SEN2 (January 2026 – for the 2025 calendar year):

- EHCP caseload continues to grow significantly, with 4,062 active EHCPs as at census day, an increase of 439 plans (12.1%) from 3,623 last year.
  - This is ranked 14th out of 15 local authorities in the region, indicating a significantly higher EHCP prevalence than most neighbouring authorities.
  - EHCP rates are particularly high for:
    - 11-15 year olds: 873.79 per 10,000 (1,528 plans)
    - 16-19 year olds: 758.37 per 10,000 (988 plans)
    - 20-25 year olds: 135.70 per 10,000 (231 plans)
- The Local Authority received 1,111 new requests for EHC needs assessments, an increase of 125 requests (12.7%) compared to the previous year.
- 797 requests were agreed for assessment during the year, up by 95 (13.5%), while 289 requests were refused, down by 19 from the previous year.
- The authority issued 576 new EHCPs during the collection period. Rotherham's rate of issuing new EHCPs is above regional average.
- There were 322 EHCP transfers into the authority, an increase of 57 (21.5%), adding further pressure to placement sufficiency and casework capacity.
- Performance against the statutory 20-week timescale improved slightly, with 440 of 549 EHCPs (80.1%) issued within the required timeframe, compared with 79.3% in the previous year.
- Demand for specialist provision continues to increase, reflected in the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Dashboard. Rotherham has a lower proportion of children with high needs in mainstream schools (42.5%) compared to regional average (47.4%).
- The number of young people recorded as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) with an EHCP increased to 92, compared with 60 last year. This is due to a significant focus on the post 16 cohort and ensuring tighter oversight on placement and progression.

Currently, the EHCP Service continues to manage significant and sustained growth in demand, whilst maintaining strong performance across several key statutory functions. The number of children and young people with an EHCP has increased by 12% over the last year, rising from 3,737 to 4,198 plans, reflecting ongoing pressures across the SEND system. A total of 334 new requests for assessment have been received since April 2026 (3 months).

Despite increased demand, front-end statutory performance remains strong, with 93.8% of requests progressing to assessment within the statutory six-week timescale. Transition review performance continues to be a particular strength, with 99.5% of primary transition reviews and 90.3% of secondary transition reviews completed within statutory deadlines.

The service also continues to demonstrate effective management of annual reviews. Of those reviews completed and submitted on time by schools, 96.7% were acknowledged by the EHCP Team within the required four-week timescale, with 72.5% of all annual reviews acknowledged within four weeks including when reports were not submitted on time.

Performance against the statutory 20-week EHCP timescale remains a key area of challenge, with 36.1% of plans issued within timescale during June 2026 (as you can see a significant drop since January 2026). Work is ongoing to improve timeliness through process improvements and targeted recovery activity, particularly in ensuring reports that form the EHCP are submitted on time. Delays

within the annual review process also continue to impact overall performance, with 48.2% of annual reviews completed within 12 months of the previous review and 27.5% of amended plans finalised within 12 weeks of the review meeting.

Tribunal activity remains high, driven primarily by increasing demand for specialist placements and complex placement disputes. However, the service continues to achieve positive outcomes through early resolution, with 93% of appeals in 2025/26 concluded without the need for a final Tribunal hearing, resulting in significant cost avoidance and allowing resources to remain focused on frontline delivery. At present, and for the current calendar year there have been 80 tribunals lodged (16% increase from this time last year), with 51 currently active (29 resolved). A new pilot scheme has been introduced during the summer holidays (One Touch appeals) which provide shortened time frames for section I appeals only. As of this date, 4 have been lodged.

Key messages for Schools Forum:

- EHCP numbers continue to rise significantly, increasing demand across the SEND system.
- Strong statutory performance is being maintained at the assessment stage and in transition reviews.
- Timeliness of EHCP issuance and annual review completion remains a priority area for improvement.
- Tribunal volumes continue to increase, reflecting wider pressures relating to specialist placement sufficiency.
- Rotherham are a regional (and national) outliers for percentage of EHCPs issued and maintained as well as the proportion of pupils with EHCP in mainstream/specialist provision.