

Freedom of Information – Response – 26916

This request relates to the governance and operation of SEND/ALN decision-making panels within your authority.

Please provide:

1. Copies of the current and any previous Terms of Reference (or equivalent governance documents) for all SEND/ALN-related panels, including but not limited to:

o Request to Assess panels

o Placement panels

o Resource / Funding panels

o High Cost panels

o Any multi-agency SEND/ALN panels

The terms of reference can be found on the following link:

[send-decision-making-panel-terms-of-reference](#)

2. Where no Terms of Reference are held, please confirm:

o What formal governance documents regulate the panel's operation

o The specific section(s) of your Scheme of Delegation relied upon

o Whether quorum rules exist and where they are recorded

o Whether voting procedures exist and where they are recorded

N/A

3. Please provide:

o The template used to record panel decisions

Suffolk County Council do not use templates to record panel decisions as these are recorded on Action Logs and Caseworkers then action from there.

o The template used for decision letters following panel discussion

Outcomes are communicated by telephone in the first instance, via the allocated case officer, unless a different preferred method has been agreed. Where parents cannot be reached, outcomes are typically sent by email.

o Any written "criteria", "threshold guidance" or "decision-making framework" used by panels

Panels do not operate to a fixed numerical threshold or rigid eligibility criteria. Instead, decision-making is informed by statutory guidance and professional judgement, with each case considered on its individual merits. In particular, panels are guided by:

- The Children and Families Act 2014*
- The SEND Code of Practice (2015)*
- The child or young person's assessed needs, outcomes, and evidence provided by professionals*
- Consideration of whether requested provision or support is necessary to meet identified needs and secure specified outcomes*

The panel's role is to support consistent, lawful, and transparent decision-making rather than to apply a published threshold or formula. There is no separate written "threshold guidance" or decision-making framework beyond the statutory guidance and local panel governance documentation referenced above.

4. Please confirm:

- o Whether cost of provision is considered by panels prior to determining suitability of provision*
- o Whether parents or young people attend panel meetings*
- o Whether minutes are formally approved and retained*

Panels first consider whether provision is suitable to meet the CYP's assessed needs. Once suitability has been established, panel may then consider value for money in accordance with statutory duties, including consideration of placement and transport costs.

Parents and young people do not attend panel meetings. Panels are decision making forums based on written evidence and professional advice; however, parents' and young people's views are represented through submitted reports, professional contributions and statutory processes.

Panels do not produce minutes. Decision outcomes and actions are recorded in formal action logs, which are retained in accordance with the council's retention schedule for a period of 2 years.