

Policy for the provision of specialist equipment in schools for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) SEND

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Introduction

Each child and young person is entitled to receive an education that is tailored to their individual needs, fosters high standards, and supports the realisation of their full capability. This education should empower them to:

- Reach their highest potential
- Develop into confident individuals leading fulfilling lives
- Successfully transition into adulthood, whether through employment, further education, higher education, or trainingⁱ

Some children and young people require specialised educational provision due to disabilities that may prevent or hinder their ability to fully engage with the standard educational resources available. These challenges can vary by age and may fluctuate over time. Children and young people with a sensory or physical disability may also require additional equipment to effectively access learning and other opportunities afforded to their peers.

East Sussex County Council (ESCC) is committed to the meaningful inclusion of all children who may experience barriers to learning, to access an appropriate curriculum to progress, achieve and thrive within an educational setting. This means identifying and removing the barriers some children face in accessing the most appropriate setting. This enables children to learn, enjoy and participate alongside their peers.

Prevalence of Special Educational Needs & Disabilities in East Sussex

As of the end of March 2025, ESCC maintains just over 5,000 Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) for children and young people aged 0 to 25ⁱⁱ. This number has increased by 1,400 over seven years and evidences the increased demand on the Local Authority to issue and maintain significantly more statutory plans in recent years. ESCC acknowledges the financial pressures that are evident within the SEND systemⁱⁱⁱ

The costs of making provision that is outlined in an EHCP; where this is deemed educational provision, is funded through the schools' High Needs Block. The allocation of High Needs Block funding to the Local Authority is allocated to meet specialist support and provision for pupils with SEND. This includes top-up funding for schools (for costs above £6k per child) and can be used for specialist equipment.

ESCC recognises the need to continually respond to the increasing incidence of children and young people with SEND, which includes funding towards specialist equipment.

Why do children need specialist equipment?

Children and young people within educational settings may need specialist equipment to:

- Facilitate access to the curriculum
- Promote inclusion
- Encourage function
- Develop their skills

Equipment should enable the child to be more active and participative in the education setting e.g. a standing support would enable a child to stand alongside other children at the sandpit, which might otherwise be impossible. It may also allow them to use their hands more freely to play/write, helps to develop upper body motor control, and improve lower body strength. Such items of equipment can enable the child to participate more fully in activities and access the curriculum.

Purpose of this guidance/policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all children with SEND can access the equipment that they need within an educational setting. Section 25 of the Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to ensure integration between educational provision and training provision, health and social care provision, where this would promote wellbeing and improve the quality of provision for disabled young people and those with SEND (SEND Code of Practice 2015 p38).

This guidance serves to clarify the responsibilities for the provision of equipment between CITES, East Sussex County Council, NHS Sussex and schools/educational settings within East Sussex. Thereby promoting a collaborative multi-agency approach to ensure the children and young people receive the right support at the right time. This will be achieved by:

- Ensuring children and young people have their needs appropriately assessed and the necessary equipment provided to enable them to access all aspects of school life, achieving their potential and to maintain their health and independence.
- Provide guidance on when/which equipment may, or may not be provided to the child/young person in early years settings, school or college (further education)
- Clarify the funding responsibilities for the provision of equipment between CITES, East Sussex County Council, Sussex Health, and schools/educational settings.
- Modifying the specialist equipment ordering pathway (see **Appendix 1**) considering VAT rules.

The Identification and Assessment of Need

Professionals working with students may, at any point in time, identify the need for specialist equipment to support a child's learning and participation in education and the school may subsequently provide this.

Currently, the Children's Integrated Therapy and Equipment Service (CITES)¹ is jointly commissioned by ESCC and NHS Sussex to assess, prescribe and provide an equipment service to children and young people from 3 years old to 18 years old (or up to 19 if in full time education) within East Sussex. This also includes the prescription and provision of specialist equipment for use at school following a clinical assessment.

¹ *Provided by Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust'*

It is for the school to determine in the first instance whether the pupil's identified equipment need is over and above that which is '*ordinarily provided within school*'.

The school should also determine whether provision of the equipment should be made immediately from within the school's resources or, whether provision should be considered during the formal assessment or annual review process.

Securing Specialist Equipment in Schools

Equipment that is prescribed and provided by CITES is available for all children or young people with SEND in every educational setting (except for Independent Non-Maintained Schools who have their own funding streams). This includes preschool, school and some post 16 educational settings.

The equipment a child might require could be either:

- Part of the equipment the school has purchased. This may be from their own budget in anticipation of providing education to children with SEND
- Equipment the school has received support to supply. This may be based on agreement in a child's EHCP.

Schools will often already have equipment ('*ordinarily provided*') such as:

- ICT for some children with dyslexia, motor skill difficulties or sensory needs
- Raised tables and workstations
- Adapted chairs
- Necessary adaptations to toilet facilities

Funding of Equipment in Schools

ESCC schools are expected to contribute towards the cost of purchasing specialist equipment that is essential to meet the needs identified in an EHCP or other specialist assessment (e.g., Occupational Therapy), relating to access to education and participation in school life.

ESCC will consider contributing towards the cost of equipment in schools. It will do so on a case-by-case basis and will be prepared to consider exceptions outside of this policy where necessary.

In East Sussex, the funding for children across the range of state-run provision is agreed through Schools' Forum. These descriptors are based on the level of need and the type of support required. Banding is useful to guide resource allocation and help to determine the level of funding needed for children. Thus, to ensure contributions are fair, equitable and transparent the following table summarises the expected school contribution based on the type of school and banding (see Tables 1 and 2 below).

Table 1 - Annual Contribution by School Type

	Type of School						
	Primary	Secondary	Special (see table 2)	Schools with Specialist Facilities			
				Primary SF		Secondary SF	
Contribution (excluding VAT) within an academic year per school	£1000	£2000	£10,000	ASD	£10,000	ASD	£12,000
				SLCN	£5,000	SLCN	£12,000
	Targeted A & B Up to 5 Pupils £1600	Targeted A & B Up to 5 Pupils £2500		SLCN & PSD	£7,500	SPLD	£9,000
				PD	£10,00	PD	£9,000
	5+ Pupils £2200	5+ Pupils £3000					
	Enhanced A & B Up to 5 Pupils £6500	Enhanced A & B Up to 5 Pupils £7000					
	5+ Pupils £7000	5+ Pupils £7500					

Table 2 - Annual Contribution for Special Schools

Special School Breakdown Group	School's Total Annual Contribution towards specialist equipment
1a (Mild ASD) changing	£12,000
1b (ASD + LD)	£13,000
2 (SEMH)	£14,500
3 (PMLD + Profound LD)	£15,500

High Needs (EHCP) Top-Ups 2025/26

The amounts shown in the tables above are calculated based on placement values and the predetermined top-up amounts provided to each school per year according to their student population. Once a school reaches its annual spending threshold for equipment prescribed by CITES, it may apply to the Local Authority for additional funding to meet the specialist equipment needs of the pupils attending the school. These amounts will be reviewed every three years, considering inflation fluctuations and overall school budget considerations. Note that these thresholds do not apply to early years settings.

Once the above thresholds have been reached within an academic year, the school can apply for additional funding to provide specialist equipment for individual pupils. The school will need to contact ESCC via the Joint Commissioning Team (JCT) directly and complete the required request form (see **Appendix 2**)

Funding by ESCC will be considered when the item required is essential to the education of the pupil. In principle, all or nearly all its constituent parts must be essential to enable inclusion and access to education for the pupil. ESCC will not consider requests where another body is obliged to provide funding, such as health or social care. For example, equipment such as wheelchairs and associated accessories are not the responsibility of ESCC or the school but are provided by health services.

For further information about funding responsibilities of the various agencies please see **Appendix 3**.

Equipment Provision - Schools/Settings, CITES and ESCC Responsibilities

1. Schools are responsible for funding equipment for individual pupils with SEND in line with the '*SEND Code of Practice*' and '*The notional SEN budget for mainstream schools: operational guidance*'^{iv}.
2. It is the school's responsibility to liaise with the ESCC if a contribution for equipment costs is sought following a CITES prescription.
3. ESCC may *contribute* to the purchase of a range of equipment. Decisions regarding any contribution from ESCC will be based upon a request from the school *and* advice received and/or any specialist assessments deemed appropriate by ESCC and will usually only be considered following a clinical assessment and prescription by a CITES professional.
4. The East Sussex Sensory Needs (SCSN) Service will be responsible for the purchase and funding of specialist equipment for pupils who have vision impairment or are D/deaf or deafness. For further information please see: **Appendix 4: Sensory Needs Equipment Policy 2025**
5. The School or ESCC are not responsible for contributing to the cost of *all* equipment identified as being required for a pupil. For example, equipment may be identified by health care professionals as being required following surgery, or to support a particular treatment plan
6. Schools are responsible for ordering the equipment. If a school experiences difficulties, they may contact CITES to place the order on their behalf. Schools should be mindful that this will incur an additional cost of 20% (VAT).
7. ESCC will *only* contribute to the purchase cost of any item of equipment that has been assessed and prescribed as being required for a pupil. ESCC will not fund any other costs associated with the consideration of, or supply or purchase of the equipment, including for example:
 - Extended warranties
 - Installation
 - Maintenance or servicing costs (see *Equipment Safety/ Maintenance*)
 - Storage

8. ESCC will not contribute to the cost of any equipment that has been ordered by a school without a prescription, even if the cost exceeds the schools' contribution thresholds.

ICT Equipment

The authority will not consider requests for laptops, I-pads, software/apps as these should be available through normal school resources. Additional IT equipment to support a child's vision impairment or deafness may be available via the East Sussex Sensory Needs (SNS) Service.

If the school wishes to seek a contribution from the local integrated care board (NHS Sussex) for the purchase of ICT hardware, the school will be required to arrange for this with NHS Sussex at the school's own expense. ESCC is unable to agree to contribute to the cost of any ICT hardware/software.

Ownership of Equipment

Equipment purchased without a contribution from ESCC

- The equipment is the property of the purchasing school.
- When a pupil leaves the school, the school can decide whether to keep the equipment or sell it to the receiving school.

Equipment Purchased *with* a contribution from ESCC

The equipment is the property of the purchasing school, however where a pupil transfers to another East Sussex school and the equipment is still considered appropriate for the pupil and the receiving school does not have suitable equipment for the pupil's use, the receiving school can either:

- Contribute to the previous school depending on the age of the equipment (see suggested scale below) *or*
- Purchase replacement equipment

ESCC will not contribute to the receiving school towards the cost of similar replacement equipment unless an assessment recommends a change of equipment. The receiving school must therefore be given the opportunity to purchase the equipment at a percentage of the original cost to the school (excluding LA contribution). The receiving school is not obliged to purchase the equipment.

Where a pupil transfers to an agency placement or is to receive their education other than at school, the Assessment & Planning Team retains the right to purchase equipment, from the school in accordance with the scale below, (based on the cost to school at time of purchase). The Assessment & Planning Team is not obliged to purchase the equipment.

Suggested scale for a school purchasing equipment from the pupil's previous school and the rate at which the Assessment & Planning Team may buy back equipment:

Age of equipment from date of delivery	% of threshold payment £1000 primary, £2000 secondary)	% depreciation from original cost of equipment if paid in full
Less than 1 year old	75%	15%
1- to 2-year-old	50%	20%
Over 2 years old	25%	50%
Over 5 years old	Negotiable	Negotiable

Equipment Purchased *wholly by* ESCC

In this case the equipment is owned by ESCC on behalf of the child. This means that the equipment will move *with* the child. Thus, if the child transfers to another school the equipment will go with them without any cost to the new school.

Equipment Responsibilities

Additional Parts

Where peripherals are required e.g. cables, the school will be responsible for their purchase.

Insurance

The school is responsible for the insurance of all equipment irrespective of whether central resources have contributed to the initial purchase.

The school must ensure that insurance cover includes all risks within the school premises and any risks associated with equipment used away from the school premises.

The school is responsible for repairing or replacing any equipment that has been damaged, lost or stolen. Central resources will not contribute to any costs associated with replacing equipment under these circumstances even if the cost of the replacement equipment exceeds the school's threshold contribution.

General use and care / relocation

- It is the responsibility of the school / setting to follow the manufacturer's instructions regarding cleaning of the equipment and record this appropriately.
- Equipment is specific for the child who it is prescribed for. It must not be used for other children without assessment and agreement of a therapist. The setting/school should adhere to decontamination and infection control policies.

Safety/ Maintenance

- Schools are expected to arrange thorough examinations of hoists by the equipment provider every six months in accordance with the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (LOLER).
- The equipment safety must be reviewed in line with the child/young person's needs and each item of equipment should be visually checked before each use for wear and tear. This is the responsibility of *all* staff who use the equipment with the child/young person. This should be imbedded in any training the staff receive. Please see **Appendix 5** for a checklist for use with hoists and slings.
- All electrical equipment and equipment that falls under LOLER regulations (1998) must have a Pre-Planned Maintenance (PPM) visit carried out by a competent person - this will be arranged by the school. Schools are advised to arrange this in good time. Please see **Appendix 6: Standard Guidance on Maintenance Intervals**

for further information.

- Schools/settings/therapists need to report faults/damage to the equipment manufacturer/supply in a timely manner.
- The school will be expected to provide funding for maintenance of such equipment. Where the equipment is lost or damaged, the school will be expected to arrange for a replacement or for repairs to be undertaken without delay.
- In addition, the school will be expected to nominate a competent adult* to carry out regular checks to ensure equipment is working and being used as intended.
- The frequency of checks may be varied by the visiting professional.

**This could be controller of premises/caretaker or preferably a member of staff who regularly uses the equipment.*

Relocation

- The CITES service will arrange for the collection of the equipment when it is no longer meeting the needs of the child for whom it was prescribed.
- Equipment **should not** be transported to the child's/young person's home/residential address during school holidays unless the equipment is the child's/young person's main mode of mobility. The Therapist should use either standard or recycled non-standard stock to meet the need over the summer holidays, put in a contingency plan if equipment cannot be sourced. This may be an exercise programme, assistive movement, or other alternatives.
- Equipment can be moved if a child/young person transfer's school. This can be organised this through the school themselves.

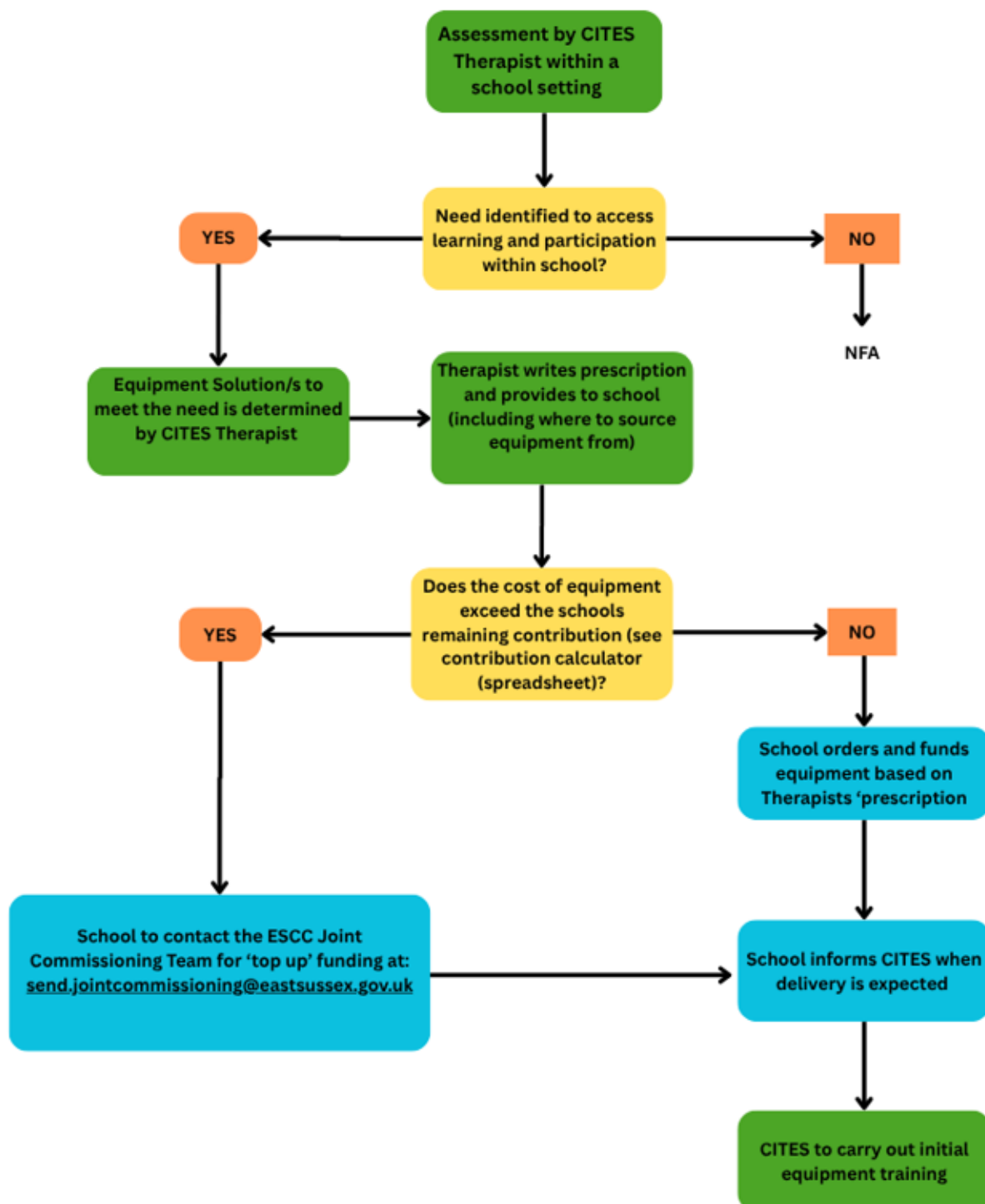
Training of staff in the use of equipment

Any training required by staff or pupils in the use of bespoke specialist equipment will be provided by CITES following equipment delivery to the school. It is the school's responsibility to inform CITES of the expected delivery date to ensure the child can access the equipment without delay.

Any further/additional manual handling training is the responsibility of academies and academy trusts to organise themselves for maintained schools please contact SEND Joint Commissioning (SEND.JointCommissioning@eastsussex.gov.uk) to arrange manual handling training for your school.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Flow chart for New Non-standard Equipment Process for schools



Appendix 2: Request Form for ESCC ‘top-up funding’ for School Equipment

Please complete all sections of this form, attaching a quote for the equipment required, and send to: send.jointcommisioning@eastsussex.gov.uk

Child's Name:	Click or tap here to enter text.
Date of Birth:	Click or tap here to enter text.
School:	Click or tap here to enter text.
Please give an outline of the child's needs:	Click or tap here to enter text.
Equipment Required:	Click or tap here to enter text.
Cost:	Click or tap here to enter text.
Please give a summary of how this equipment will help the child to access learning/the environment:	Click or tap here to enter text.
Name of professional requesting and role:	Click or tap here to enter text.
Contact details (email and phone number):	Click or tap here to enter text.
Please confirmation that the recycled stock list has been checked and that the item is not available and/or that an alternative suitable item is not available	Click or tap here to enter text.

Appendix 3: Funding Responsibilities for Specialist Equipment in schools

Funding responsibilities for equipment may vary depending on the child's individual needs and whether these are primarily health or education related, or a combination of both. However, the following general responsibilities apply:

Equipment	Financial Responsibility
Fixed rails i.e. grab rails, toilet rails, stair rails	School
Portable hoists (mobile hoist and freestanding gantry hoists)	School/ESCC
Ramps - temporary	School
Ramps - semi-permanent	School adaptation funding
Seating systems for postural management	School/ESCC
Slings	School/ESCC
Standers	CITES/NHS Sussex
Toileting equipment	School/ESCC
Walkers	School/ESCC
Wheelchairs	NHS Sussex

Responsibility Area:

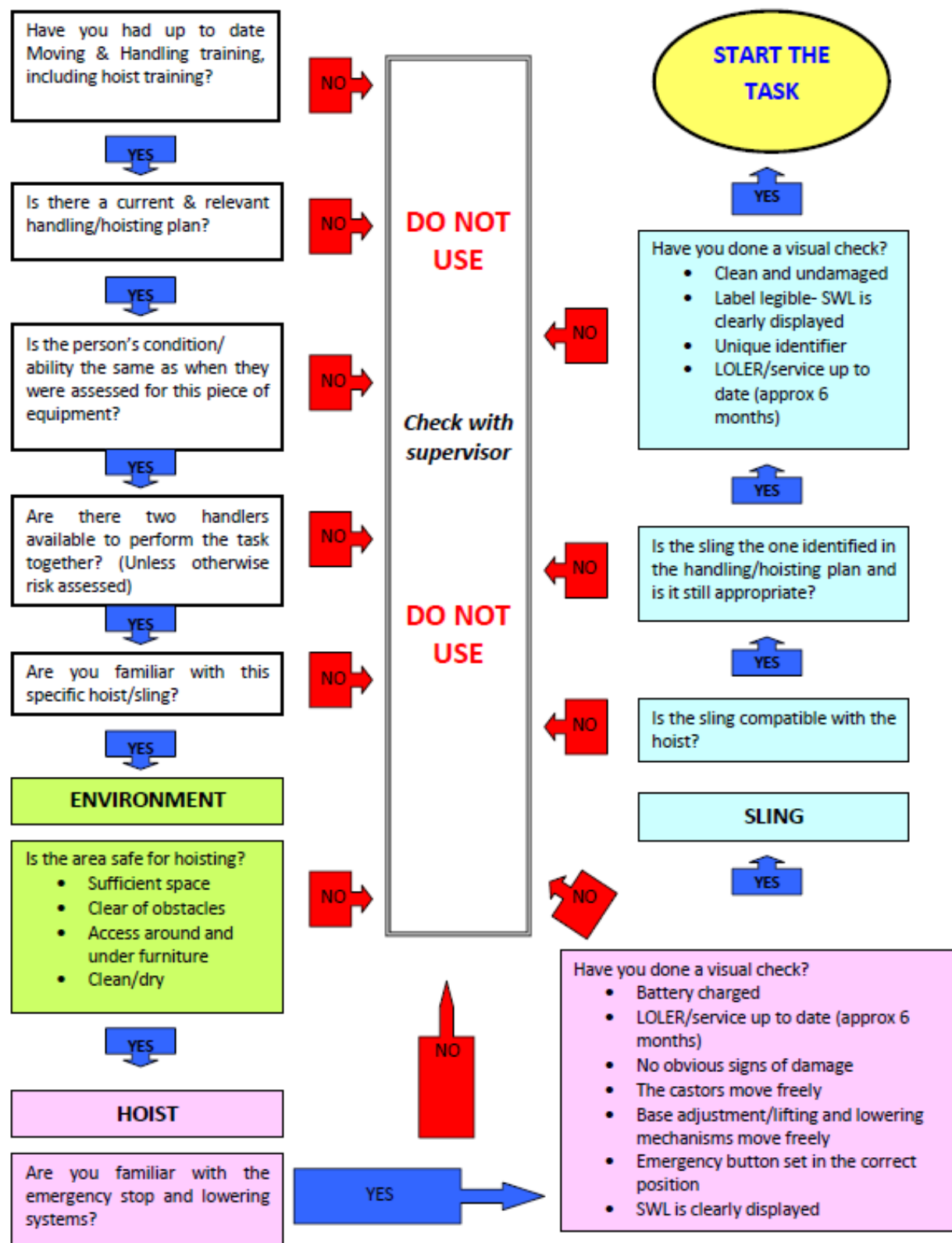
Health Need	NHS Sussex/CITES
Education Need	ESCC/School

Appendix 4: Sensory Needs Equipment Policy



SNS Equipment
Policy June 2025.pdf

Appendix 5: Flow Chart for use of Hoists and Slings



Source: ESCC Children's Services Department

Appendix 6: Standard Guidance on Maintenance Intervals

Appendix 7: Legislation

Below is an overview of the main UK laws and statutory codes of practice that ensure children with SEND have access to the equipment they need:

Children and Families Act 2014^v

This landmark piece of legislation transformed the way support for children with SEND is planned and delivered. It introduced Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), which set out a child's needs and the necessary provision—including specialist equipment—to meet those needs. Local authorities, in collaboration with health, education, and social care services, are legally required to follow the provisions of this Act when assessing and meeting the needs of children with SEND.

SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 Years^{vi}

Published as statutory guidance, the SEND Code of Practice provides a comprehensive framework that outlines the responsibilities of local authorities, health bodies, and educational settings. It explains how to identify needs, prepare EHCPs, and deliver the appropriate support, which includes providing necessary equipment (for example, specialized furniture, assistive technologies, and other equipment essential for learning and daily activities). Although the Code of Practice is guidance rather than law, public authorities must act in accordance with it unless there is a good reason not to, and it is frequently referenced by bodies such as the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in assessing whether support arrangements are adequate.

Equality Act 2010^{vii}

The Equality Act 2010 ensures that children with disabilities, including those with SEND, are not subjected to discrimination. It requires reasonable adjustments to be made in education and service provision. This means that if a child needs specialist equipment or adaptations to fully access educational or social opportunities, providers must take steps to ensure these are provided as part of creating an inclusive environment.

References

- ⁱ SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years, January 2015
- ⁱⁱ DRIM report, as of March 2025 ESCC maintains just over 5,000 EHCPs (5,002).
- ⁱⁱⁱ (Public Pack) Agenda Document for People Scrutiny Committee, 11/03/2024 10:30
- ^{iv} The notional SEN budget for mainstream schools_ operational guidance 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK.pdf
- ^v Children and Families Act 2014, UK Public General Acts, 2014 c. 6
- ^{vi} Department for Education and Department of Health (2015) SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.
- ^{vii} Equality Act 2010. Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>. (Accessed April 27, 2025).