

Southwark's CENMAC Assessment Criteria

Local Authority Threshold for Specialist CENMAC Assessment

Southwark Council commissions CENMAC to provide specialist assistive technology assessments and support for children and young people with significant and complex needs.

A referral will only be agreed where there is clear evidence that specialist assessment is required beyond ordinarily available provision or standard accessibility tools, hardware and software.

A referral must demonstrate **all of** the following:

1. Significant and complex need

The child or young person has significant barriers to communication or curriculum access that are beyond what would typically be supported through school resources and standard technology.

This may include:

- severe physical difficulties affecting access to standard hardware;
- complex communication needs requiring specialist AAC solutions;
- consideration of alternative access methods such as eye-gaze or switch access;
- multiple and interacting needs resulting in substantial barriers to independence and participation.

2. Existing provision has been fully explored

The school or setting can demonstrate that appropriate support has been implemented, monitored and reviewed over time, including:

- ordinarily available provision;

- targeted SEN support;
- environmental adjustments;
- low-tech communication supports;
- staff training;
- existing school equipment and resources.

There must be evidence that these approaches have not been sufficient to meet need.

3. Standard Technology Is Insufficient

The school or setting should demonstrate that relevant hardware, software and accessibility features have been trialled and do not adequately meet the child or young person's needs.

This may include:

- built-in accessibility features;
- speech-to-text and text-to-speech tools;
- word prediction and literacy support software;
- standard laptops, tablets or other commonly available devices.

The referral must clearly explain why specialist assessment is required beyond these solutions.

Requests primarily for equipment, software licences or AAC devices will not normally meet the threshold.

4. Robust Evidence of Specialist Need

The referral includes evidence from relevant professionals, where available, demonstrating the nature, severity and impact of the child or young person's needs.

This may include reports from:

- Educational Psychology;
- Speech and Language Therapy;
- Occupational Therapy;
- Vision or Hearing Support Services;

5. Documented Trials Over Time

The referral provides evidence of interventions and technology trials that have been implemented, monitored and reviewed over time. This may be through an Individual Support Plan, Annual Review documentation or similar.

Evidence should demonstrate:

- what was trialled;
- how long it was trialled for;
- the level of support required;
- the outcomes achieved; and
- any remaining barriers.

Where communication needs are identified, appropriate low-tech AAC approaches should normally have been explored before referral for specialist technology.

Referrals Not Normally Agreed

The following would not normally meet the threshold for a CENMAC assessment:

- requests primarily for funding of equipment;
- requests for laptops, tablets or software that could reasonably be provided through school resources;
- difficulties that can be addressed through standard accessibility features or commonly available software;
- referrals where interventions or technology have not yet been trialled;
- referrals where evidence of impact is limited;
- requests that fall more appropriately within NHS, Adult Services, or another statutory service's remit;
- referrals seeking equipment without a clearly evidenced specialist assessment need.