



ABRS+ Guide to Accessing Paid SEND and EOTAS Provision

This document provides an introductory guide for riding schools wishing to offer funded provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), including through Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) arrangements.

1. Overview of Funding Routes

Riding schools can receive paid referrals for SEND learners through:

A. School-Commissioned Provision: Mainstream and special schools can directly commission part-time equine-based programmes for pupils needing SEMH, confidence-building, therapeutic support, or alternative learning. Providers do not need to be Ofsted-registered, as the school retains educational responsibility. This is the quickest route to funded placement.

B. Local Authority (LA) Alternative Provision Framework: Local Authorities maintain approved lists of providers. Being on the AP Framework enables direct referrals from the LA. If the framework is closed, schools may still commission directly, or the LA may use a light-touch approval route.

C. EOTAS (Education Other Than At School):

- EOTAS is a formal mechanism allowing a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) to receive legally mandated education outside a school setting. Provision must be specified in Section F of the EHCP, and the LA is legally responsible for funding and arranging all specified provision.
- EOTAS is used when a child cannot attend school, even with adjustments. It may include home tuition, online schooling, therapeutic input, specialist centre provision and equine-based programmes. EOTAS is not elective home education.

2. What Riding Schools Need in Place

- **Safeguarding:**
 - Enhanced DBS checks for staff
 - A Designated Safeguarding Lead
 - Safeguarding and child protection policies
 - Risk assessments for all equine activities

- **Insurance:**
 - Public liability
 - Employers' liability (where applicable)
 - Care, Custody and Control insurance
- **Programme Documentation:**
 - Clear session structure and outcomes
 - SEND/SEMH aligned goals
 - Pricing model (per session/term)
 - Attendance and progress tracking
 - Termly review or summary reports
- **Staff Competence:**
 - SEND/SEMH experience or training
 - Trauma-informed practice
 - First Aid training

3. How to Begin Receiving Funded Referrals

Step 1: Contact local schools (SENCOs, pastoral leads, special schools) with information about your programme. Offer taster sessions and site visits.

Step 2: Contact your Local Authority's SEND or Inclusion Team. Request to be added to their external provider list and ask about joining their Alternative Provision Framework.

Step 3: Contact the Virtual School for Looked-After Children (LAC). They may fund equine-based placements directly.

Step 4: Provide simple referral processes and monitoring tools such as:

- Referral form
- Consent forms
- Individual learning plan
- Attendance logs
- Progress reports

4. Understanding EOTAS

EOTAS is a statutory mechanism that allows a child or young person with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) to receive their legally mandated education outside a school setting. It is

distinct from elective home education and is only used in exceptional circumstances where attendance at school is not possible, even with reasonable adjustments.

Key Legal and Regulatory Points:

- **Section F of the EHCP:** Provision must be explicitly written into Section F, specifying the type, frequency, and provider. This section is legally binding, and the Local Authority (LA) carries full responsibility for ensuring delivery.
- **Threshold for EOTAS:** EOTAS is not a parental choice. It requires strong professional evidence (medical, psychological, or educational) that school attendance is not viable. In many cases, agreement is reached only after tribunal or formal review.
- **Annual EHCP Review:** Providers delivering EOTAS must contribute evidence to annual reviews, demonstrating progress against Section F outcomes. Reports should be structured, measurable, and suitable for scrutiny by Ofsted during school inspections.
- **Ofsted Oversight:** While providers are not directly Ofsted-registered, schools and LAs remain accountable for the quality of provision. Ofsted may request evidence of progress, safeguarding, and welfare standards during inspection.

Safeguarding and Quality Assurance:

- **Safeguarding Escalation:** Providers must have clear safeguarding policies, including referral routes to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for concerns about staff conduct.
- **Outcome Measurement:** Provision should evidence impact using recognised frameworks (e.g., Boxall Profile, Thrive, or SEMH progress tools). Reports should include pupil voice, attendance, and case studies.
- **Inspection Readiness:** Documentation must demonstrate structured programmes, risk assessments, and welfare compliance. Staff should be trained in trauma-informed practice, SEND awareness, and equine-specific first aid.

Suitability of Equine Provision:

Equine-based programmes can be included within EOTAS packages where evidence shows they are necessary and appropriate to meet the child's needs. This may include:

- Therapeutic input for SEMH needs
- Confidence-building and resilience programmes
- Alternative learning pathways aligned to EHCP outcomes
- Structured non-riding activities (stable management, groundwork) where physical or sensory needs require adaptation

Practical Considerations:

- **Staff Ratios:** Clear supervision standards should be maintained, with ratios appropriate to the learner's needs and risk profile.
- **Accessibility:** Providers must demonstrate reasonable adjustments (e.g., mounting aids, adapted tack, sensory-friendly environments).
- **Transport:** LAs often arrange transport for EOTAS learners; providers should liaise with transport teams to ensure safe access. **5. Next Steps for Riding Schools**

You may wish to prepare:

- A programme brochure for schools and LAs
- A SEND/SEMH equine learning outcomes framework
- A safeguarding information pack
- A pricing model for commissioned places

The ABRS+ can support members in understanding requirements and establishing high-quality, welfare-centred programmes for SEND learners.