

Education Health and Care Plans for under fives

Deciding whether or not a child under 5 requires support through an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) can be challenging. It is important that you work with your child's early years setting, the local authority and any specialists who might be involved, to help you to understand your child's needs and how to access the appropriate support.

How is a request made?

Parents and early years providers can follow the same process to request an assessment for an EHCP as for a school aged child or young person.

Criteria

The SEND Code of Practice says that the local authority must:

'consider whether there is evidence that despite the early years provider, school or post-16 institution having taken relevant and purposeful action to identify, assess and meet the special educational needs of the child or young person, the child or young person has not made expected progress.' This means that the early years setting must have accessed all the support available to them such as specialist advice and funding to provide additional support, and be able to show that despite this, the child has not made the expected progress.

The SEND Code of Practice goes on to say *'children aged under two are likely to need special educational provision in accordance with an EHC plan where they have particularly complex needs affecting learning, development and health and are likely to require a high level of special educational provision which would not normally be available in mainstream settings.'* This means that for a child under 2 to require support through an EHCP, their difficulties will be significant. They will usually already have health professionals involved in their care.

If a request for an EHC needs assessment is made for a child aged between 2- 5 years attending an early years provision, the local authority should consider whether or not the setting can meet the child's needs within their resources and other funding available. If not, the child may need additional support set out in an EHCP.

If a child is not attending an early years setting, the local authority will need to collect as much information as possible. They will then need to consider whether the child's difficulties or developmental delays are likely to require support through an EHC Plan when the child is due to attend an early years setting or school.

Naming a placement

Parents can ask for a particular maintained nursery school to be named in their child's plan. The local authority must name the school unless they can show that it would be unsuitable for the age, ability, aptitude or SEN of the child. They also do not have to name it if the child's attendance would impact others access to efficient care, education or use of resources.

Parents may also choose an independent, private or voluntary early years setting for their child. If the local authority agrees it is appropriate, it can name this in the plan and must fund the provision. However, it is important to note that an independent, private or voluntary setting does not have to agree to take the child and the local authority cannot order it to.

Reviews for EHCPs

Local authorities must carry out a yearly review of an EHCP. For children under 5, it is good practice to review an EHCP every three to six months to ensure that the information is still relevant and appropriate. These reviews do not need to be carried out in the same way as the annual review as they do not necessarily need to involve all the professionals unless appropriate. These interim reviews are often more informal.

An EHCP must be reviewed in sufficient time prior to the child transferring from their early years setting to school. The annual review and any amendments must be completed by February 15th in the calendar year of the intended school start. This review will be important in ensuring that the plan is relevant, up to date and reflective of the support that the child will require in their intended school setting.

Where can I get further information, advice or support?

Contact the IASS team on:

Phone: 01743 280019 (Open 10am-4pm Monday—Friday)

Web: www.cabshropshire.org.uk

www.facebook.com/IASSShropshire

Email: iass@cabshropshire.org.uk

Address: Fletcher House, 15 College Hill, Shrewsbury, SY1 1LY