

## Education Health and Care Plans

Dudley has produced a Wider inclusion Strategy looking at SEND provision in the borough and how this can be moved forward. From the information we have been given part of the rationale in implementing this plan will be that pupils with an EHCP or EHC, education, health and care plan, who have been assessed and placed on the funding matrix at levels B and C will no longer be placed in Special Schools but will remain in mainstream provision. A major shift that will have not only an impact on the pupils with an EHCP but also on the schools they are attending. According to an article in Schools Week there has been an 11% rise in EHC (education, health and care) plans this year, according to [government statistics](#). This continues a 4-year upward trend. 39.2% of plans were held by pupils in mainstream schools, and 38.6 by those in special schools. It seems that Dudley is actually falling into line with what is happening nationally.

### So what is an Education Health and Care plan?

An education, health and care (EHC) plan is for pupils who need more support than is available through special educational needs (SEN) support in mainstream schools. They apply to young people up to the age of 25.

EHC plans identify educational, health and social needs and set out the additional support to meet those needs.

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### How pupils get an EHC plan

GOV.UK explains that the local authority (LA) carries out an assessment if it thinks the pupil may need an EHC plan. An assessment can be requested by anyone who thinks it may be necessary, including:

- The school
- The parents
- Doctors or health visitors
- Family friends
- Young people themselves, if they are aged 16-25

After the assessment, if the LA decides the pupil needs a plan it will draft it and send the parents a copy. Final EHC plans must be issued within 20 weeks from the date of the assessment.

### Content of an EHC plan

EHC plans have 11 sections:

- A - the views, interests and aspirations of the pupil and their parents
- B - their special educational needs
- C - health needs related to SEN
- D - social care needs related to SEN
- E - outcomes - how the extra help will benefit the pupil
- F - special educational provision (support)
- G - health provision reasonably required by the learning difficulties or disabilities which result in the pupil having SEN. Any individual health care plans should also be included
- H - social care provision
- I - placement - type and name of school or other institution
- J - personal budget arrangements
- K - advice and information - a list of the information gathered during the EHC needs assessment

It must also include any provision required by the pupil to assist in preparation for adulthood and independent living, if they are in or beyond year 9.

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That's the plan. It is meant to be compiled by all the agencies that have any dealings with addressing a child's needs. It should include contributions from Health and Social Care, any specific support a child is given; e.g. Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy etc and it should involve at all stages the child's parents, carers and the young person themselves. Once the plan has been accepted then children are allocated additional funding dependent on need. They are placed on what is called the Matrix. This has been developed to ensure that the child with the most need is given the largest amount of money.

However parents report that they are dissatisfied with how plans are produced, that they are sketchy and don't include all their child's needs and that they are not specific enough in detailing what should be provided for their child and what the expected outcomes should be.. They also take too long to produce and parents are kept waiting longer than the designated timescale for the receipt of their child's assessment.

Local authorities who have the responsibility to produce EHCPs are often not provided by Health or Social Care with sufficient information or input into actually ensuring that the plan is specific enough and addresses the child's needs. In fact it is quite common for EHCP reviews to be organised with parents and no other agency apart from Education actually attends. Perhaps EHCPs should have named key professionals on them to improve accountability, such as with the Early Help model. Currently Health and Care representatives very rarely attend EHCP reviews so it is difficult to hold them to account and they have no ownership of the plan and it's resourcing.

Parents have often commented, "My son needs special equipment to shower but when you ask for help getting it they (Health professionals) don't want to know". Within schools we need to ensure that an EHCP is addressing the educational needs of the child, is it specific enough, does it reflect where the child is at and are the decisions based on all the child's identified needs. Health support is vital in ensuring pupils are in the best place, i.e. school. Schools require the expert input of health professionals to maximise the outcomes for pupils. There is a lack of clarity over who should fund certain aspects of provision, Health, Care or Education. At the moment it appears that Education funding is used to support health and care needs but the situation is confused. It is an area that needs to be resolved to benefit pupils.

Quite often when a child is referred an assessment has been made and the child is placed on the matrix which allocates the funding that child will receive. However on entering a school the child is assessed by the SENCO only to discover that the assessment has not taken account of all the identified needs and the placement on the matrix needs to be altered to provide extra funding to allow for all the needs to be addressed. On appeal to the SEN team a readjustment is usually made resulting in extra funding to ensure that the child is provided with an appropriate education. All of this takes time and has cost implications. As Governors we need to ensure that the lead governor for SEN ensures that the SENCO and Senior Leadership Team are aware of this and are prepared to challenge decisions. In mainstream schools this will depend on the commitment of the Head Teacher and the SENCO in ensuring the needs of pupils are met and it raises the need for the SENCO to be part of the Senior Leadership Team

With the increase of pupils with EHCPs in mainstream schools Governors will need to ensure that pupil's needs are met. It will require more collaboration between schools as pupils transferring from a primary school to a secondary school may have specialist equipment which really, in the same way that funding follows the child, so should equipment. It is not a school resource it is an individual pupil's resource. Governors may need to question if staff have the appropriate skills for dealing with these pupils as their needs are likely to be more complex and diverse. Mainstream schools could utilise any of the authority's special schools as an excellent source of support and CPD.

Dudley have just had the results of a Joint local area SEND inspection. Carried out between the 20th May and 24th May 2019, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC)it looked at judging the effectiveness of the area in implementing the disability and special educational needs reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. It makes interesting reading and states, "Education, health and care (EHC) plans and processes are poor. Plans do not focus on outcomes and rarely help to prepare young people for adult life. Often, they contain very little information about health and social care." It is obviously a process that needs to be remedied sooner rather than later.

EHCP, whilst in some ways better than the old statement of special needs which they replaced, have still got a long way to go in providing for the complex and diverse needs of current and future pupils. It is acknowledged that numbers are growing, that the needs of pupils are more varied and it should be a key priority that planning for funding etc is essential, not only from an educational position but also from the aspects of Health and Social Care. Until all those who should have input into an EHCP accept their responsibilities then it is still a flawed system in ensuring that the needs of some of societies most vulnerable children are still at risk of not achieving the outcomes they deserve.

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