

## Top Tips

### Education, Health and Care Plans: The Importance of Services and Families Working Together

- 1. Start preparing the family early** – Talk about the EHCP process well before a child enters nursery. Encourage the family to start thinking about their child's communication needs and how they might impact on their access to education. Signpost useful organisations so that they can make an informed choice about requesting an assessment.
- 2. Encourage the family to talk to the SENCO or manager at their child's nursery if they want to pursue an assessment for an EHCP** – private nurseries may have never requested an EHCPNA before and they may often need a lot of assistance to fill in the required information for an assessment request and to understand that there is a statutory timescale to adhere to.
- 3. Be realistic with families – EHCPs are designed for children whose needs cannot be met substantially within a nursery's or school's own budget and resources.** It is not the place of the SLT/ToD to make the decision to request an EHCPNA. If families ask about an EHCP, explain that there needs to be sufficient evidence before an assessment is agreed. They are for the most needy.
- 4. Advise families to seek advice and work in partnership with other organisations and agencies** – encourage them to let their ToD and SLT know if they are going to request an EHCPNA so that they can provide support and a report to include with their request. The Independent Advice and Support Service (IASS) offers excellent independent support to families.
- 5. Talk to the family about the different stages of an EHCPNA** – explain clearly that a request must go to a "yes/no" SEN panel before an assessment is carried out. An assessment by all the professionals involved is followed by a draft plan which the families have fourteen days to look at and respond to. The draft plan then goes to panel again before a final plan is issued
- 6. Advise the family to keep all the information they have on their child's needs** – Some families have reports and written information from many different professionals and sources. It is vital that they keep this information as local authorities have a duty to consider all reports regardless of whether they originate from local professionals or independent organisations.

- 7. Collaborate as much as possible: Discuss and agree which assessments you are going to use to avoid duplication and/or carrying out unnecessary assessments** – joint assessments are useful. Ideally, assessment results should be shared and discussed before the practitioner's form is filled in. Although the Early Support Monitoring Protocol (ESMP) is not an assessment, it is a useful tool for the SLT and ToD to look at together and use to describe a child's needs and current levels of functioning.
  
- 8. Aim for consistency** – ensure assessment results do not contradict each other's. There may be good reasons for a child's differing performance on assessments and close liaison and discussion between professionals can help to identify the reasons for this e.g. illness, fatigue, unfamiliar setting etc. This should be clearly documented in the practitioner's paperwork.
  
- 9. Avoid "recommending" an educational provision** – ToDs and SLTs should not be recommending an educational provision but they can share information about the types of provision available. Suggest families visit a range of educational settings so that they can decide the best fit for their child.
  
- 10. Ask the local authority case worker to send you a copy of the draft plan / working document** – this is not always routinely sent to the contributing ToDs and SLTs. Offer to meet the family to go through the draft plan so that any inaccuracies or inconsistencies can be amended.
  
- 11. When writing outcomes for the EHCPNA, collaborate closely with the child's family** - so that your outcomes reflect their aspirations whilst being realistic and achievable.
  
- 12. Arrange a meeting with the child's SENCO, class teacher, EP etc. to identify outcomes which bridge the "health and education divide."** Ideally, liaise with a child's educators to devise outcomes which reflect both the parent's aspirations and the professionals' assessment of a child's needs. This makes it much easier for SEN panels to decide which outcomes to put in a draft plan.
  
- 13. Remember that the EHCP process may cause anxiety and stress for families** – it is important to listen to a family's concerns and appreciate that the EHCP process can instil difficult feelings of uncertainty about their child's future. Waiting even six weeks for a "yes" to an assessment can feel like a very long time.