

Our Top Tips for Education Health and Care Plans

Getting started with your child's Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) can seem like a very daunting and scary process. Here are a few pointers that we hope you will find helpful. Feel free to let us know if you have other tips that we can add to this list. It would be great to share anything you find that works well or to give advice on how to avoid any pitfalls!

1. Make sure you have **up to date reports** from all the people that your child is involved with. This could include speech & language therapy, portage, your child's school or nursery, hearing, visual or physical impairment services (SaPTs in East Riding, iPass in Hull), educational psychologist, medical services such as your paediatrician or others, and if appropriate, social care. Downright Special can also be asked to write a report. When you get the reports make sure you are happy with the content and that nothing is missing. **Remember if it isn't written in a report then it can't go in the EHCP** so checking these reports include everything is very important. If something is missing, incorrect or not clear then do go back to the service and ask for the report to be changed.
2. We believe that almost all children with Down syndrome will **need full time 1:1 support** in school. This should include break times and lunchtimes and you might want to make sure that this is explicitly stated in the plan. If your draft EHCP does not give you full time support and you believe your child needs it then challenge the decision.
3. Remember that the only sections that you have a right to appeal to the SEN & Disability Tribunal are:
 - Section B (The child or young person's educational needs)
 - Section F (the special educational provision required)
 - Section I (the name and type of school)

so take care to make sure you are particularly happy with the content of these before agreeing the EHCP.

4. Think about a '**golden thread**' linking everything in your EHCP. By that we mean if there is a need identified in section B then there should also be a corresponding outcome in Section E and provision in Section F. When you get your draft you could think about numbering all the needs identified or highlighting them and then numbering the corresponding outcome and provision to check nothing has been missed.
5. If you want your child to continue attending Downright Special once they reach school age then you may want to think about getting this included in the plan. You may also want to think about any bespoke or external training that will need to be done.

6. Make sure everything in the EHCP is **specified and quantified**. By this we mean it has to be clear and concise about what is to be done, how it will be done, who will do it, how often, for how long. Outcomes should be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time bound).
7. Don't be afraid to get help from your local **Special Educational Needs or Disabilities information, Advice & Support Service (SENDIASS)**. They can help with assessments and Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans, SEN and disability, health and social care law and can also attend meetings with you.
 - East Riding SENDIASS : <http://eastridinglocaloffer.org.uk/care-and-support/support-for-parents-carers-and-young-people/sendiaass/>
 - Hull SENDIASS: <https://www.kids.org.uk/Hull-sendiaass>
8. Bradford Down Syndrome Training & Support Service has a great document that can be used to help you **write your parental contribution**. Have a look in the appendix of their Education Pathway document: <http://www.downsyndromebradford.com/free-downloads/>
We hold copies of this book so if anyone would like a copy then please let us know.
9. EHCP's must be reviewed at least every twelve months where the child's progress towards the agreed outcomes and long terms aspirations are considered and updated as necessary.
10. If you are coming up to a key transition time e.g. nursery to primary school, year 6 to secondary or Year 11 to further education your annual review needs to happen in the autumn term before the transition. This is to allow enough time for school places to be agreed.
11. Preparing for Adulthood (PFA). Thinking about long term aspirations should be part of every EHCP and annual review but from Year 9 onwards there must be a focus on the areas of support to prepare for further education & employment, independent living, friendships & community inclusion, and keeping good health as an adult. The young person should be give support to participate in the process and make their views heard. There is a useful checklist on the Preparing for Adulthood website: <https://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/SiteAssets/Downloads/p5wzjq0j636941293449773408.pdf>
12. Other websites we have found helpful:
 - IPSEA also have a very useful EHCP checklist as well as lots of model letters and information about the EHCP process and the law - www.ipsea.org.uk
 - Norfolk Community Health and Care have a "Top Tips for Writing an EHCP" www.norfolkcommunityhealthandcare.nhs.uk
 - DSA (Down Syndrome Association UK) have EHCP resources available to download - <https://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/for-families-and-carers/education/sen-and-the-law/>
 - KIDS have a Timeline of what should happen, and when, at each stage of the EHCP process - <https://www.kids.org.uk/education-health-and-care-plans>
 - The Council for Disabled Children has some good examples of EHCPs: <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/education-health-and-care-plans-examples-good-practice>
13. If you are really struggling with anything to do with your EHCP or just want some further advice from an expert then you could consider paying privately for help. One local organisation that a few of our families have used is <https://www.sendconsultancyservice.co.uk/>