



EHC Plans and Preparing for Adulthood

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What does success look like?

Including children and young people's aspirations and outcomes within their Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan is crucial to supporting the development of the whole child and ensuring that young people with SEND achieve their fullest potential.

Local Authorities must find creative ways of establishing children and young people's needs and aspirations, and use this to develop outcomes across education, health and social care. There should be a "golden thread" running through EHC plans, linking aspirations, needs, outcomes and provision. Outcomes should be person-centred, holistic, supportive of aspirations and be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timed).

Aims

As part of the PfA demonstration sites, **Bath & North East Somerset, Dudley, Kingston and Richmond, Leeds, Newcastle, Portsmouth, and Rutland** have been developing their practice in relation to EHC plans.

They worked with the PfA team to develop a Context, Mechanisms and Outcomes (CMO) map which identified key aims they planned to work towards:

- Developing EHC plans that are consistently person-centred and needs-based, with a clear link between aspirations, outcomes and support
- Ensuring a focus on PfA, in particular employment
- Engaging children and young people meaningfully in EHC plans, as well as parent carers
- Better balance between timeliness and quality
- Knowledgeable and skilled staff developing EHC plans

Getting started

In each demonstration site it was important to start out by mapping what was already happening and how it was working in relation to the aims above.

This led to a range of activity across the areas:

- Workshops and training on EHC plans with young people, parent carers and the workforce
- Development of exemplar EHC plans, templates and guidance
- Coproduction of tools/resources for young people and staff to support with EHC planning
- Training on life outcomes for young people, parent carers and practitioners
- Involvement of young people in reviewing the quality of EHC plans and Annual Reviews
- Involvement of commissioners with auditing and monitoring

Overcoming the challenges

EHC plans were identified by the majority of sites as the highest priority area for development.

Most reported seeing signs of changing attitudes and a culture shift towards the importance of linking aspirations to outcomes; however, there remains issues with a lack of buy-in at a strategic and service level, with inconsistent engagement of children and young people in the production of plans.

In order to achieve these aims the Local Authorities identified that:

- Plans need to be person-centred and developed through engagement with the young person and their family
- There needs to be a clear 'golden thread' linking aspirations, outcomes and support, with a strong PfA focus

- There needs to be improved workforce knowledge and understanding of the EHC planning process and what a good PfA-focused plan looks like
- Plans need to be asset-based around aspirational outcomes and provide clear pathways using a range of quality services and support

Making progress

Bath & North East Somerset has introduced a new job role for three Special Educational Needs (SEN) practitioners, based in schools, to support the EHC planning process and strengthen relationships with schools. This has led to improved access to good quality advice and better support for young people in their transition to adulthood.

Dudley has been moving towards a whole-of-life planning process for care, using an asset-based approach. They have developed an effective transition process by engaging independent living, employment, education and training services to support children, young people and families. Children and young people have been involved in co-designing developments and a youth health champion coordinator role has been developed.

Leeds has taken a range of measures to ensure the 'golden thread' is embedded within plans. They report that staff working on EHC plans are now more aware of the importance of aspirations. Visual guidance on the transition process for parents and young people has been coproduced. Improved partnership with the transitions team has led to the development of a new moderation process which is starting to show that the quality of plans is improving.

Newcastle has been working on revising the format of the EHC plans as part of a pilot with 70 post-16 young people. Section A of the new EHC plan format uses the headings chosen by young people, and other sections now use headings based on PfA themes: living as independently as possible; employment and the world of work; community and social involvement; health needs related to SEND; and family and community life.

This new EHC plan format is now in use in different age groups and settings and the response so far has been very positive, with specific feedback about how it is supporting discussions between young people and professionals.

Tools and resources

Guidance from DfE on EHC plan eligibility and an outcomes tool: <http://preparingforadulthood.org.uk/resources/all-resources/advice-and-guidance-from-dfe>

Resources from EHC Plan workshops: <http://preparingforadulthood.org.uk/resources/all-resources/education-health-and-care-plan-workshops>

Examples of good practice for EHC plans: <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/education-health-and-care-plans-examples-good-practice>

Fact sheet for young people: <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/making-ourselves-heard/resources/ehc-plans-explained>

Top Tips for engaging young people in EHC plans: <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/top-tips-professionals-support-children-and-young-people-participate-their-ehc-plan>

