

Briefing paper

Education (England)

Understanding the problem

Some children may need more support than others to achieve their potential in early years settings and at school. This may be because they have a disability, medical condition or other additional needs that means they experience difficulties in learning and/or in making use of the educational facilities provided.

Some support can be put in place without a full statutory assessment. This is coordinated by the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) in both early years settings (Early Years Action and/or Early Years Action Plus) and at school (School Action and/or School Action Plus). If a child's additional needs cannot be met by this, a request is made to the local authority to carry out a statutory assessment. After input from all people involved with the child, the local authority then produces a statement to identify the child's support needs and how they should be met.

Parents should always be fully involved in the early years setting's and school's response to meeting their child's needs. However, they may not be familiar with the process or know what support can be put in place. Some common areas parents encounter difficulties with are:

- who to approach if they think their child needs additional support
- finding a suitable school for their child and understanding the admission process for children with special needs
- going through the process of requesting a statutory assessment
- being refused a statutory assessment or being unhappy with their child's statement and not knowing what to do next
- accessing support at school for their child's medical needs or personal care
- being excluded from school activities (disability discrimination)
- exclusion from school because of challenging behaviour
- home to school transport, particularly when the disabled child attends a different school to siblings
- home tuition if their child has medical needs and is unable to attend school.

How can children's centres/family information services help?

- encourage parents to seek help early if their child needs additional support for their special educational or medical needs
- explain how support can be put in place to meet a child's additional needs
- inform parents of all their options when choosing a school for their child
- signpost parents to their local parent partnership service for further information and advice
- if parents want to appeal about decisions, signpost to independent organisations who can support them.

Contact a Family can provide:

- A **range of factsheets** with more detailed information including ones on special educational needs and transition to adult services.
- Our **Medical Directory** provides information on over 1000 medical conditions, including details of associated behaviour. See www.cafamily.org.uk/dirworks
It also contains details of national condition support groups who may be able to provide education advice specific to the child's condition.

Education: Sources of support

Contacts	What Can Be Offered
Contact a Family Helpline Tel: 0808 808 3555 Email: helpline@cafamily.org.uk www.cafamily.org.uk/helpline	Provides advice and information on any aspect of caring for a disabled child including education. Telephone interpreter service is available. <i>Criteria – free to families caring for disabled children up to 19 years old living in the UK</i>
Contact a Family Family Worker Tel: 0808 808 3555 www.cafamily.org.uk/fafiya	Provides an enquiry or home visiting service to families struggling to access services, including access to educational support for their child. <i>Criteria – free to families caring for disabled children up to 19 years old in certain areas of UK.</i>
Early Support www.earlysupport.org.uk	Their background information factsheet on education explains the different types of support for a child's learning in the Early Years <i>Criteria – free to families with disabled children & professionals working in England</i>
Parent Partnership Service www.parentpartnership.org.uk	Provides advice, support and information to parents and carers whose children have special educational needs. <i>Criteria – parents and carers living in their catchment area</i>
Equality and Human Rights Commission Tel: 0845 604 6610 www.equalityhumanrights.com/	Enforces equality legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act. Can provide advice to individuals as well as businesses, voluntary and public sectors. <i>Criteria – anyone living in England, Scotland and Wales</i>
SENDIST (Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal) Tel: 0870 241 2555 www.sendist.gov.uk/	Considers parents' appeals about local authorities' decisions regarding their children's education. Also deals with disability discrimination claims. <i>Criteria – parents and carers in England</i>

This is one of a series of briefing papers to help children's centres and family information services begin to support families of disabled children on specific issues. You can browse all of these at <http://www.cafamily.org.uk/childcentres.html>

To find out more about how the children's centre team at Contact can help please contact:

Karen Robinson, Senior Children's Centre Adviser tel: 01706 220578 e-mail: karen.robinson@cafamily.org.uk