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EHCPs explained for parents: what they are and how physiotherapy fits in

A plain-English guide to Education, Health and Care plans: what they cover, how the process works, and where a physiotherapy report fits in.



● What an EHCP is

An Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) is a legal document for children and young people in England, from birth to 25, whose special educational needs can't be met through the support a school or nursery can normally put in place on its own. It sets out, in one place, a child's needs and the specific education, health and care provision that must be provided to meet them, and it's legally enforceable, which is what sets it apart from a school's own internal support plan.

Not every child who needs extra help needs an EHCP. Many children's needs are well met through a school's ordinary 'SEN support' (sometimes coordinated by a SENCO, the school's special educational needs coordinator), without a formal plan at all. An EHCP is generally for more complex or significant needs that require support beyond what a setting can reasonably provide from its own resources.

● How the process works

A parent, carer, young person (aged 16 to 25), or a professional working with the child (such as a school, GP, or health visitor) can request that the local authority carries out an 'EHC needs assessment'. The local authority then decides, based on evidence gathered, whether to go ahead with a full assessment, and if so, whether to issue a plan. Statutory timescales apply throughout: 6 weeks to decide whether to assess, and a total of 20 weeks from the initial request to a final plan being issued, in the great majority of cases.

As part of an assessment, the local authority gathers evidence from a range of people who know the child, which typically includes education (the school), health (which might include a paediatrician, physiotherapist, occupational therapist or speech and language therapist), and the family's own views,

plus, wherever possible, the child or young person's own views.

● Where a physiotherapy report fits in

If physiotherapy is part of the picture, whether that's ongoing input, a period of assessment, or advice given to school, we can provide written evidence describing your child's movement needs and the physiotherapy provision that would help meet them, for either a new assessment or an annual review of an existing plan. This is a paid report (see pricing), agreed with you before any work begins, and it describes your child's needs and our professional view honestly, exactly as we would for you directly.

We are one voice among several in the process, not the whole of it, and the final plan is written by the local authority, drawing on all the evidence gathered, not by any single professional.

● What to expect, and how to get support

The EHCP process can feel slow and bureaucratic from the family side, and timescales aren't always met in practice, which is a common and valid frustration. Your local authority's 'Local Offer' webpage sets out its own process and contacts, and every area has a free, independent SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service) that can help you understand the process, and support you at meetings or with paperwork, entirely free of charge.

If you think an EHC needs assessment might help your child, start by talking to your school's SENCO, or contact your local authority's SEND team directly; a parent or carer can request an assessment without needing a school's agreement first.

This guide is general information written by a paediatric physiotherapist, not medical advice about your child. If you are worried, trust your instinct: speak to your GP or health visitor, or get in touch with us.



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Families can book directly, no GP referral needed. Professionals can refer at

littlemoversphysio.co.uk/refer. Read this guide online at littlemoversphysio.co.uk/guides/ehcps-explained-for-parents.