

# EARLY YEARS SUPPORT

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Support for children whose special needs are identified between birth and when they go to nursery.

## SEN SUPPORT IN EDUCATION

Graduated approach to support children and young people with SEN in nursery, school or college, based on ASSESS, PLAN, DO, REVIEW cycle. Within control of the nursery, school or college.

## EDUCATION, HEALTH & CARE PLAN

A plan detailing support and provision for children and young people whose needs cannot be met within SEN Support. Contains a description of needs, outcomes and provision around education, health and social care.

## ANNUAL REVIEW

Formal review of progress against targets and outcomes and chance to revisit and reassess needs, outcomes and provision.

## TRANSFER

Process of transferring a Statement of Educational Needs to an EHCP. Managed through a transition review process.

Before a child is in nursery education (15 hours per week from age 3) or school they are **not** deemed to be in education, and so generally an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is not relevant. However, some children do require extra support in the early years and this can be accessed without having an EHCP.

## Health professionals and therapists

If a parent is concerned about the progress of a child that is not yet in school or nursery they should speak to their GP or health visitor who can refer them to a paediatrician or other medical professional if appropriate. If the child is found to have special educational needs then normally they will be referred to the community paediatrician, who can then assess and refer to other services, such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy or speech and language therapy. Children with complex needs may also be referred to a multi-disciplinary team to ensure their management is integrated between Health (paediatrician, therapists), Education (portage, early years) and Social Care (disabled children's team). Paediatricians have to inform Education if they feel a child will have specialist educational needs when they start school.

Following an assessment by the therapy teams the child will be assigned a therapist, if required. Therapists will typically visit the child in the home and will work with the family to devise appropriate programmes that support the child's development. For some children this community therapy support will be in addition to specialist medical support that they receive through specialist hospitals.

## Support from Social Care

If a child has significant additional needs, the family may wish to access additional support through Social Services. This is through the Disabled Children's Team within the Integrated Services for Children with Disabilities (ISCD). Through social care you may be able to access family support, funding for short breaks or leisure activities and other useful services. Richmond and Kingston maintain a disabled children's register, which they use to help identify which children may need to access services. If you wish to register your child with the Disabled Children's Team (Richmond) or the ISCD (Kingston) you should refer to the Local Offer website for the contact details.

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## Voluntary Sector Support

There are many local voluntary sector organisations (charities) that organise specialised services for disabled children and children with SEN. These range from specialist play sessions, baby massage, talks on supporting children with additional needs, specialist play facilities, etc. For full details of what is on offer look on the Achieving for Children Local Offer website or contact SENDIASS. Services are also available from Universal Health Services (services for all families), parents should ask their health visitor about these.

## Portage

Portage is a home teaching service for pre-school children whose learning and development is significantly delayed. If a child's special needs are identified at a very early age, then they may receive help from the Portage Service. Portage home visitors work jointly with other professionals involved in the child's care, health and education to ensure that everyone is working together to plan activities that are best suited to the child and their whole family. The Portage Service can also offer some targeted group activities.

A trained Portage home visitor will visit the home on a weekly or fortnightly basis and work alongside parents and carers to provide structured activities that will stimulate their child's development and support early learning. These activities are broken down into easily taught steps and practised and recorded at home, as learning is often easier for the child in familiar surroundings. The service also supports children with social communication difficulties or autism.

Portage continues until the child is 3 years old and receives 15 hours a week of free early education. When the child starts attending pre-school or nursery provision, the Portage home visitor will liaise with the key staff, offering support over the transition period. Home visits will also stop if the child no longer needs the service.

Portage operates an open referral system, where the parent or a professional can refer a child. For contact details look at the Achieving for Children's Local Offer website.

## Transition to Nursery Education

Some children will need additional support or adaptations to the environment or curriculum to attend nursery from the age of 3. All nurseries have a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo), in much the same way that schools do. The SENCo is responsible for ensuring that the child receives the SEN support that they need. When looking at nursery placements for a child with SEN it is important that the parents speak to the SENCo so that they understand any additional needs and what support may need to be put in place.

SENcos are supported in their role by their attached Early Years Consultant who can support and advise around all aspects of inclusion. Should a child require additional support within an early year's setting then the SENCo is also able to draw upon the support of an Early Years SEND Support Officer in terms of practical advice, modelling of good practice and developing appropriate resources within the setting. The Early Years Consultant for SEND, who is part of the Early Years Team in Achieving for Children provides training to those new to the role of a SENCo, hosts termly network meetings to promote good practice and provides advice around accessing funding. The role of the Early Years Consultant is to directly support the settings and for this reason this post does not normally have contact directly with families.

## EHCPs for pre-school children

Generally, a pre-school child will not have an EHCP, as an EHCP will be issued only where the child has Special Educational Needs. The Children and Families Act (Section 21(1)) states the following:

'Special educational provision', for a child aged 2 or more or a young person, means educational or training provision that is additional to, or different from, that made generally for others of the same age in:

- (a) mainstream schools in England,
- (b) maintained nursery schools in England,
- (c) mainstream post-16 institutions in England, or
- (d) places in England at which relevant early years education is provided.

Hence the child is not in education and does not have special educational needs as defined by the Act. In exceptional cases a child under 3 may need to apply for an EHCP in order to get appropriate support at a nursery.

Early Years settings in both Kingston and Richmond are able to draw upon non-statutory funding pots to support them in meeting the needs of children with SEND. In Kingston settings have access to the Inclusion Grant and Richmond's equivalent is the SEND Grant. Settings should contact the Early Years Consultant SEND for guidance on how to access this funding. This funding is designed to support settings in meeting the needs of children with SEND, implementing goals from professionals and therapists involved and enhancing staff ratios at times to support targeted planning. Settings are required to monitor the use and impact of any grant award in both boroughs. The child must first access the SEND Grants before an application for an EHCP is considered.

Some 2 year olds are entitled to 15 hours of free education and childcare. In terms of SEND, if the child already has an Education, Health and Care Plan or receives Disability Living Allowance then they are entitled to access this funding. Children are eligible the term after they turn 2 years old. Early years settings work closely with Achieving for Children brokerage officers to determine eligibility and access these places

Achieving for Children has an early years specific brokerage officer in each borough. Their role is to help parents find local early year's settings, explain early education funding, how to access this funding, eligibility etc. They are often contacted by parents of children with SEND to talk through concerns that they might have in terms of taking those first steps into an educational setting. Although they would not necessarily advise on one setting over another, they would be able to explain what support, resources and funding the setting could access.

# EARLY YEARS SUPPORT

## Who does what?

### Nursery's role

- Talk to the parents (and other professionals if involved) to understand the child's needs and to ensure that suitable support and provision is put in place for the child when they start nursery
- Contact the Early Years team to request a SEND Grant
- Support parents and consult with Early Years on how best to prepare for an EHCP request

### Guidance for Parents and Carers

- If you have concerns about your child's development speak to your GP or Health Visitor
- If your child has a diagnosis make sure that you have a referral to the community paediatrician and that you are referred for an assessment to the therapy teams, if this is considered necessary by the paediatrician
- Do ask about a referral to Portage. If you prefer you can refer your child yourself, bear in mind that Portage will work with children whose development is significantly delayed
- Use the local offer website and the KIDS information and advice line to find out about services and support for pre-school children with SEN

### SEN Team role

- Signpost parents whose children will need extra support to start nursery as to the most appropriate route to take (EHCP or Early Years support through SEND Grant funding)

### Other professionals

- Assess the child's needs
- Observe children in nurseries and give advice to nursery staff
- Provide appropriate advice and guidance to the family
- Provide Portage or therapy programme through one-to-one or group work with the child to support with development