

Top ten tips for parents applying for an Education, Health and Care Plan

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1. Don't be put off applying if school refuse

In most cases, it is the school who highlight the need for an EHCP and will listen to concerns from parents and carers and act in the child or young person's best interests. If this is not the case, you can apply for Assessment yourself directly to the Local Authority.

2. Be organised

You will need to be organised. Start a diary as a time line and get yourself a big file. All information relevant to your child, especially if it relates to their special educational needs, should be copied and kept. This will prove invaluable during the process and beyond so keep a record of absolutely everything... appointments, reports, emails, phone calls, letters.

3. Gather your evidence

Dig out any old reports relevant to your child/young person that may hold relevant information. Gather support records and any communication/incidents, support plans documented from school. For all referrals to paediatricians, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, educational psychologists, etc this will act as the proof that your child needs the help you say they do.

4. Read the SEN policy

Look at your council's SEN policies to support your case. Read the SEN Code of Practice and use it. Everything you need to know is there and it will explain the process. Make sure school has tried all available means to help your child and ask them to provide records of this. This should confirm that your child is not making appropriate progress.

5. Build a support network

You can also contact your local SENDIASS officer. Their knowledge and advice will be invaluable. Support from other parents is available on online SEN support boards, where most parents are happy to share their experiences. There should also be a Parent Carer Forum in your area, these are a great source of Information, Advice, Guidance and support.

6. Don't be put off getting a medical diagnosis (If not in place already)

Some people don't like labelling their child, but a proper diagnosis will help to convince the LA to provide your child with the help they need, especially if they have an unseen disability like dyslexia, dyscalculia, ASD or ADHD. You need to be able to prove that this is not just your opinion, so take your child to the GP and ask for a referral to a paediatrician. A firm medical diagnosis is harder to ignore.

7. Be persistent

The Local Authority can "refuse to assess" on the grounds that your child or young person has "average ability"... be mindful of this, your child may be of average ability, bright or even gifted but because of their differences, they may struggle to access learning in school and/ or are not being supported appropriately or are in the wrong setting for their level of need.

8. Prepare your report

Once you have all the information, you need to know what to do with it. Your LA should have a document outlining its policies, read this. Make it work for you. Use the LA's own policies to show that your child isn't getting what they should. If you can't prove this, your case will be weakened. You will have the opportunity during the submission to include a written statement. Include as much relevant information/reports as you can but be concise, two pages of relevant facts is better than six pages of waffle and don't be afraid to ask for help.

9. Stay strong

This process can be stressful, look after your own physical and mental wellbeing in order to help your child. That means eating healthily, sleeping well and just doing whatever works for you to keep your spirits up. Remember you are your child's greatest asset and best advocate. Don't give up.

10. Trust your instincts

You know your child best. Only you know how they react in certain situations and how a bad day at school affects them at home. This is important information for your application as it can be evidence of how an inappropriate educational setting is affecting your child's entire life, and the rest of the family as well.

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About ADHD Foundation

To find out more information about the ADHD Foundation please visit www.adhdfoundation.org.uk.

