

## NATP 44

### GUIDANCE FOR GETTING HELP IN SCHOOLS – Jane Mitchell



Schools and managing relationships with schools are a huge issue for parents, foster parents, Special Guardians, Kinship carers – everyone within the community of Looked After Children.

#### **Local Authority Provision for SEN and Disability (SEND)**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

Under the SEND legislation which came into force in September 2014 Local Authorities have to publish a list of the services which are available to families of children with SEN and disabilities, this may include support groups, youth clubs, social learning groups and activities and support with schools. This is called the **Local Offer** and should be available via the Local Authority Website.

Below is a list of the professionals who may be involved, what they do, and how to find them:

#### **Outside School:**

**Child's Social Worker:** Has specialist knowledge of adoption and fostering. Develops relationship with the child and has knowledge of their history. Plays a supportive role for the child which may include their educational provision, due to their links with Special Educational Needs department of the Local

Authority. In the case of a Looked After Child (LAC) the social worker will be involved in Personal education Plan meetings and review meetings.

**Special Educational Needs (SEN) Department:** responsible for assessing level of needs of a child working in conjunction with Educational Psychologist or other specialist professionals to ensure that children have an educational provision which will support their learning needs in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). Mainstream schools are now expected to be able to support the majority of educational, developmental or behavioural issues with appropriate input from additional professionals.

**Information and Support Services/SENDIASS** (Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Services)

These are run by locally commissioned groups or charities and should be found via the Local offer. The SENDIASS team are there to help families with information about the local offer, help with filing in applications for Disability living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) as well as grants for activities and news about local support groups and social groups such as for young carers, autism or other specialised groups.

The SENDIASS team have links with the Special Educational Needs Department, and can also support parents when liaising with schools and in the process of application for an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

To find your local SENDIASS team, check this link:

<http://cyp.iasnetwork.org.uk/>

## **In School:**

Many families find that school presents a number of challenges for them due to their children's learning styles, level of cognitive ability, management of the school environment, organisation, ability to socialise and emotional management to name some of the most frequent issues. Many schools are now becoming more attachment aware, however some are still struggling with how to manage children with developmental trauma at school. In some cases schools feel that if behaviours are only exhibited at home that it is clearly the parental input that is at fault. Schools should have a policy regarding working in partnership with parents as this is recognised to be a very beneficial factor, so it is useful to acquaint yourself with this. The people that can be most helpful with regards to school are:

**Head teacher or head of year** – should have some knowledge of attachment and be able to give clear guidance and direction to staff. This is not likely to be the person who has best knowledge of the child.

**Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator – SENCo** - the person with responsibility for any child with additional needs in the school. This person should have some attachment awareness, and should be able to give guidance to class teachers about specific strategies. In addition this person is in charge of Personal Education Plans (PEPs), keeping track of progress, maintaining evidence of actions, outcomes and achievements and ultimately is the person who may be able to instigate further assessments and call in additional professionals such as Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language experts or Occupational Therapists if needed. They also may be instrumental in applications for an Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP) where the school is unable to meet the child's needs under Schools Action or Schools Action Plus. The SENCo will also co-ordinate reviews of PEPs or EHCPs.

**Home School Link Worker (HSLW)** – This person is likely to be a peripatetic worker – ie have responsibility for several schools within a local area. The HSLW offers support, advice and local information to carers as well as providing support to the young people themselves. HSLW can also be instrumental in giving information and guidance to schools about specific topics such as bullying, attachment and SEN. They work with a range of agencies and their role within a local area means that they can provide continuity when there is transition between schools. This title may vary – for example, they may be called a Family Support Worker or a Family Liaison officer.

## **Virtual School Heads**

The Children and Families Act 2014 states that *“All local authorities must have a Virtual School Head (VSH) in charge of promoting the educational achievement of the children looked after by the authority that appoints them”*.

The legislation accepts that schools may be unfamiliar with the issues of Looked After or adopted children; and the VSH is thus charged with helping schools and staff to identify the extra needs of the children in their care and make them aware of additional support which is available. The VSH also is charged with managing the pupil premium and tracking the children's progress.

Finally, the VSH works with schools and children's services on initiatives to support the education of children in care.

To find out about the Virtual head in your area, search your Local Authority website for information.

## **Identified Person in charge of Looked After Children in School**

Every school now has an officer who is designated to work with any looked after child in the school. You should be able to get this information from the school office.

## **EHCP – The new Statement.**

### **Education Health and Care Plan – EHCP**

The EHC Plan was introduced as part of the Special Educational Needs and Disability reforms which were introduced in 2014. This plan both replaces and extends the old statement, recognising the overlap between disability and some Special Educational Needs and bringing all the necessary resources together. At the same time, a child with an EHC plan is entitled to access the educational and medical and care services covered up until age 25. The individual would then be transferred to adult services if ongoing support was required.

For information about EHCP and how to apply: [www.specialneedsjungle.com](http://www.specialneedsjungle.com)

**It is important to remember that parents can apply for an EHCP without the school's support.** To get help with this contact your local SENDIASS (information above) or the following website: **IPSEA** <https://www.ipsea.org.uk>

Adopted Children are also entitled to have a transition plan to help major transitions, which shows what support the child needs and who will be responsible to ensure that support is in place, and what that support will look like. This may be extended to all LAC.

The following link is a short PDF which may be useful for schools:

[https://www.essex.gov.uk/Publications/Documents/Supporting\\_Adopted\\_Children\\_In\\_School.pdf](https://www.essex.gov.uk/Publications/Documents/Supporting_Adopted_Children_In_School.pdf)

**The DfE is supporting schools to become attachment aware by introducing free training about attachment in schools. Schools should be aware of this and it is being rolled out nationally.**