

# Educational Health & Care Plan – Our Journey

By Jean Fitzpatrick



**“Every challenge is a learning experience”**

**The path to securing an EHCP (Educational Health & Care Plan) will be different for everyone. Your journey will be as unique as your child or young person, with ups and downs, frustrations, relief, and the odd “get in there” when things go right. Expect this ...an EHCP is a legal working document for your child which should clearly set out all their needs including what support they may require for the rest of their educational life... you can do this! I did it, and this is my story.**

My grandson was in Key Stage One and had a diagnosis of ADHD. With behaviours escalating and exclusions coming thick and fast, I asked school to apply to the Local Authority for an Educational Health and Care Assessment of Needs. This is the starting point to obtaining an EHCP.

School refused because my grandson was meeting his academic milestones, therefore had no special educational need so wasn't eligible for an EHC assessment. He was bright, but staff spent the whole day trying to reset passwords on computers to remove work he didn't want to do. This meant that he wasn't accessing the curriculum at all due to his differences. Eventually they agreed to put together an application to assess and sent it off to the Local Authority (LA).

I trusted at this point that the school knew what they were doing regarding the quality of evidence needed to support the assessment process. Some do, some don't. It was a surprise therefore to receive a “refusal to assess” from the LA due to a “weak submission” from school, stipulating ‘lack of evidence’, ‘no matrix of prior support’ and ‘missing reports’. I was disappointed. Naively, I had presumed it was a forgone conclusion given the amount of evidence I knew was available. The decision was made to reapply with the promise of a thorough submission. The application went in again with the same result “refusal to assess.” for the same reasons!



To say I was frustrated was an understatement, yet it just served to spur me on because I knew my grandson needed this. I was aware that I could put forward a “parental request” but at the time it was deemed an application from school held more autonomy. That is certainly not the case anymore as more families take this option now.

School were very open to working together, so we joined forces. I ensconced myself in the office of the SENDCO armed with my file to put together a joint third application. I knew my grandson best and knew what needed to be included for this to go through. School would then sign it off.

I became familiar with the process, met with the Head and SEN Coordinator, produced an up-to-date file of evidence. I knew what the school’s responsibility was in terms of providing quantifiable evidence. I knew that without evidence of the school’s prior support for my grandson, it was pointless applying.

I walked into every meeting proudly clutching this file. It was an anxious wait but third time lucky the application was finally accepted. Now, the process of getting a good EHCP for my grandson started. It was tough to read the comments about my grandson in the draft plan, for example, ‘he can be defiant and oppositional with adults.’ However, that made me more determined to get this document right.

By this time, my grandson was still in key stage one in a mainstream primary school. The Designated Provision places in my area were all for children with cognitive and learning differences, but my grandson didn’t have these difficulties. On the contrary, he was very bright. So he was to remain in his school with support, this included full time 1-1 support both in class and during unstructured times.

By Year 4, it became clear that my grandson and his mainstream school were outgrowing each other. His mental wellbeing was suffering, and he had, by then, received a number of additional diagnoses including Autism. We began to explore a managed move rather than a permanent exclusion. Finding the right school was paramount, this needed to be the last time my grandson moved school. It wasn’t an easy process as you have to provide a good case, with evidence, as to why you are requesting an out of borough provision. Because I had been thorough with his EHCP, I was able to prove that there was no other provision in my area that could support his needs. He’s been at his current school for four years and he is flying! His needs are ever changing but, through his EHC Plan, we are able to keep on top of that, ensuring he has the support he deserves.

My passage to securing an EHCP was unique, like everybody’s will be and there were stressful and frustrating times. However, the knowledge, skills, confidence, and positivity I gained from this journey far outweighed any negative feelings I had about the process. Good luck.