

Top 10 tips for parents applying for an EHCP

By Jean Fitzpatrick



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 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, support plans documented from school. All referrals to paediatricians, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, educational psychologists - this will act as the proof.

4. Read the SEN policy

A sleep association may include things like a teddy, a specific blanket, calming music etc. Where possible, encourage your child to be independent with their sleep associations.

5. Build a support network

You can also contact your local SENDIASS officer. Their knowledge 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.

6. **Don't be put off getting a medical diagnosis**

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 the information, you need to know what to do with it. Your LA should have a document outlining its policies. 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'll have an opportunity during the submission to include a written statement. Include as much relevant information as you can but be concise, two pages of relevant facts is better than six pages of waffle.

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.

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.