

Unit 3

Special Educational Needs In Early Years

Unit 3

Special Educational Needs In Early Years

Contents	Page
Early Years and Special Educational Needs	1
Guidance for meeting SEN in Early Years Settings	3
Learning and Cognitive Difficulties	4
Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties	6
Communication and Interactive Difficulties	9
Sensory and Physical Difficulties	12
Additional Support in Early Years	16
SEN Early Years Transfer – Policy and Guidelines	17
Timelines and Responsibilities for Transfer from Early Years to School Setting	20
Managing Continence in Schools and Early Years Settings	21

Early Years and Special Educational Needs

Early Years settings and schools must have a written SEN policy. This should be reviewed and evaluated by governing bodies at least annually. The governing body's report must include information on the implementation of the SEN policy and any changes made to the policy in the last year.

Identification, Assessment and Provision in Early Education Settings

Monitoring children and young people's progress throughout the foundation stage is essential, as during this time most children and young people experience rapid physical, emotional, intellectual and social growth. It shouldn't be assumed that children and young people who are making slower progress have special educational needs. If a child appears to be making little or no progress it may be necessary to present different opportunities or use alternative approaches to learning. Ongoing difficulties may require a level of help that would not normally be available in their particular early education setting.

The graduated response that is described in Section 4 of the Code of Practice would be appropriate using the model of **Early Years Action**. This approach recognises that there is a continuum of special educational needs and where necessary, you should call upon specialist expertise to assist with the difficulties the child may be experiencing. It is important to involve pupils and keep parents/carers informed and involved at all times. You should involve them in setting targets in an IEP / Individual Provision Map, and keep these targets under review and only record that which is **in addition to** or **different from** that which is in place as part of normal provision.

Early Years Action Plus is usually, although not always, characterised by the involvement of external support services, e.g. SENTASS, EPS, who can help early education settings with advice on new IEP's / Individual Provision Maps and targets, provide specialist assessments and give advice on strategies and new materials. (see Unit 3).

The key test for action is evidence that the child's current rate of progress is inadequate (please see SEN Framework for the criteria for Action Plus in Unit 3).

A trigger for moving to **Action Plus** could be that the child:

- Continues to make little or no progress in specific areas over a long period.
- Continues working at an early years curriculum substantially below that expected of children and young people of a similar age.
- Has emotional or behavioural difficulties which substantially and regularly interfere with the child's own learning or that of the group, despite having an individualised behaviour management programme.

The decision to move to **Action Plus** will be considered by the SENCO, teachers, parents/carers and support agencies following a review of the child's current Individual Education Plan.

Adequate progress can be defined as that which:

- Closes the attainment gap between the child and the child's peers.
- Prevents the attainment gap growing wider.
- Is similar to that of peers starting from the same attainment baseline, but less than that of the majority of peers.
- Matches or betters the child's previous rate of progress.
- Ensures access to the full curriculum.
- Demonstrates an improvement in self-help, social or personal skills.
- Demonstrates improvements in the pupil's behaviour.

Guidance for Meeting Special Educational Needs in Early Years Settings

Early Years Action Plus

Following the publication of the New Code of Practice, November 2001, the information below offers guidance to Newcastle Schools and Services about the interpretation and actions that should have occurred for pupils in our schools/ settings to move from Early Years Action to Early Years Action Plus.

For any pupil to move from Action to Action Plus there should typically be a review to consider the Individual Education Plan / Individual Provision Map and intervention undertaken by the school / setting to address the pupil's needs under the heading of School Action.

A key question at such a review is what progress the pupil has made and whether the school / setting, within its own resources and expertise, has employed all available strategies. A procedure of moderation involving LA schools and other personnel will operate to ascertain those pupils to be placed at School Action Plus.

The CoP states:

'Whatever the level of pupils' difficulties, the key test of how far their learning needs are being met is whether they are making adequate progress.'

Progress can be defined in a number of ways:

- The adequacy of pupils' progress can be judged against progress made by their peers; i.e. progress is adequate which closes the gap between them and their peers, prevents the gap growing wider, or maintains their position relative to peers starting from the same attainment base-line;
- Progress can also be judged by comparing pupils' progress in areas of difficulty with their progress in areas of relative strength; i.e. progress is adequate if the gap between their areas of difficulty and strength is closing or not widening;
- Progress is adequate if it matches or betters the pupil's previous rate of progress, ensures access to the full curriculum.

Different definitions will be appropriate for different pupils. However, the preferred definition in any situation is one that is both realistic and ambitious.

Learning and Cognitive Difficulties

Learning Difficulties

Evidence is required that the child has ongoing difficulties. Indicators, below, are likely to provide initial evidence.

- Has made little or no progress towards the Early Learning goals despite receiving concentrated programmes of support under Early Years Action.
- Has had provision which has been **additional to** and **different from** that received by all pupils.
- Is working within the Foundation Stage at a level substantially below those expected of children and young people of a similar age.

General learning difficulties may show themselves in the following ways:

- | |
|---|
| • Low levels of attainment in baseline assessments. |
| • Difficulty in acquiring skills on which much other learning depends. |
| • Difficulty in generalising from experience. |
| • A range of associated developmental difficulties e.g. in communication and interaction, physical and motor development. |

Early Years Action may be indicated by:

- | |
|--|
| • Performance within the Foundation Stage outside the range within which most children and young people are expected to work. |
| • Measures of attainment and underlying cognitive skills which place the child in the lowest attaining 1 or 2 per cent of the national population. |
| • Difficulties or delays in areas of development as above, which hinder the child's access to a broad and balanced early year's curriculum. |

Early Years Action Plus may be indicated by:

- Performance within the Foundation Shape outside the range within which most children and young people are expected to work.

- Measures of attainment and underlying cognitive skills which place the child in the lowest attaining 1 or 2 per cent of the national population.

- Attainments in underlying skills (especially in speech and language, literacy and numeracy) which significantly interfere with the ability to learn effectively.

- Difficulties or delays in areas of development as above, which significantly interferes with the child's ability to access a broad and balanced early years curriculum

Resources/Reference materials

- The Complete Works – to identify difficulties and set appropriate objectives. Further work may be provided by external support agencies (EPS, SENTASS etc.) Evidence from recently undertaken tests may be necessary. Tests should be recognised instruments with up to date norms.
- Schools / settings may also use the descriptors and attainment indicators in the attached Appendices.

Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties

Provision should focus on the child's level of development learning characteristics, the learning environment that the school / setting is providing for the child, the task and the teaching style. Some difficulties in learning may be caused or exacerbated by the school / setting's learning environment or adult/child relationships. This means looking carefully at such matters as classroom organisation, teaching materials, teaching style and differentiation in order to decide how these can be developed to enable the child to learn effectively.

Evidence is required that the child:

- Has ongoing ESBD difficulties that impede the development of relationships and cause substantial barriers to learning, despite receiving an individualised programme and / or concentrated support.

Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties may become apparent in the following ways:

• Behaviour that is or seems socially inappropriate or strange.

• Behaviour which interferes with the learning of the pupil or his/her peers e.g. difficulty in following routines.

• Signs of emotional turbulence (e.g. unusual tearfulness, withdrawal from social situations).

• Difficulties in forming and maintaining positive relationships (e.g. isolation from peers, aggressiveness to peers and adults).

• Significant difficulties in sharing equipment and taking turns.

Early Years Action may be indicated by:

- Difficulty in remaining on task without frequent adult prompting accompanied often by fluctuating responses to correction, distorting the attention of the teacher and resulting in disruptions to the process of teaching and learning.

- Failure to make the progress anticipated across many areas of the curriculum.

- Signs of frustration and early indications of disaffection or disillusion with the process of education.

- Emerging problems in making and sustaining appropriate peer relationships.

- Fluctuations in mood and increasing unpredictability over attitudes to learning tasks, grouping or organisational arrangements, often resulting in short lived periods of uncooperative behaviour or withdrawal.

Early Years Action Plus may be indicated by:

- Distractibility in the classroom which inhibits the progress of the pupil even with significant adult support and an increasingly individualised curriculum.

- Unpredictability and intensity of the pattern of behaviours which significantly disrupt the learning of peers and which are beyond what can be managed by the class teacher alone or by limited interventions from the SENCO and other specialists.

- Behaviour which is bizarre and/or self injurious and/or endangers others and which leads to a significant level of rejection by peers increasing the social isolation of the pupil.

- Evidence of significant unhappiness, stress and/or disaffection over a sustained period.

Resources/ Reference materials

- The Complete Works, to identify the difficulty and set appropriate targets.
- Further work may be provided by external support agencies (EPS , SENTASS etc). Evidence from recently undertaken intervention and behavioural plans will be necessary.
- LSAs and SENTASS Nursery nurses have a very important role to play in supporting children and young people with special educational needs. Special Support Staff currently receive specific training, but it should always be recognised that their work is closely directed by the SENCOs, follows a detailed written plan with agreed targets and objectives, and is regularly reviewed.

Communication and Interactive Difficulties

Evidence is required that the child:

- Has ongoing communication or interaction difficulties that impede the development of relationships and cause substantial barriers to learning, despite receiving an individualised programme and / or concentrated support.

These difficulties may show themselves in the following ways:

• Problems with the production of speech.

• Difficulty in finding words and joining them together in meaningful and expressive language.

• Problems in communicating through speech and other forms of language.

• Difficulties or delays in understanding or responding to the verbal cues of others.

• Difficulties with the acquisition and expression of thoughts or ideas.

• Difficulty in understanding and using appropriate social language.

• Frustrations and anxieties arising from a failure to communicate, possibly leading to apparent behaviour difficulties and deteriorating social and peer relationships.

Early Years Action may be indicated by:

• Measurable speech and language skills which are somewhat below those of the majority of peers.

• Speech which is not easy to understand and which limits pupils' ability to participate in group activities, question-and-answer sessions and other activities involving spoken language.

• Problems with following instructions or understanding basic prepositions or concepts.

• Difficulties with communication with peers and in using appropriate social strategies such as turn taking and rapport in conversation which restrict the social interaction of pupils.

• Progress in areas of the curriculum, which are less language dependent, is in advance of progress in areas where language skills are important.

Early Years Action Plus may be indicated by:

• Measurable speech and language skills which are significantly below those of the majority of peers.

• Difficulties with speech production which severely limit participation in classroom activities.

• Considerable difficulties in meeting the language demands of ordinary learning activities, such as following instructions or using basic concepts.

• Difficulty in communicating with peers which lead to social isolation and apparent behavioural difficulties.

• Frustration on the part of pupils at their inability to participate in the classroom or interact with peers

• Low rates of progress in areas of the curriculum, which depend on understanding or use of language or the ability to communicate effectively.

Resources/ Reference materials

- The Complete Works, to identify the difficulty and set appropriate targets.
- Teaching Talking (Ann Locke / Maggie Beech NFER): most schools have received copies, and have had training regarding its use.
- External Support Agencies (SENTASS (YCT), EPS Paediatric SALT)

Sensory and Physical Difficulties

Hearing Impairment

Evidence is required that:

- The child has a clinical diagnosis of a significant hearing impairment.
- External support services provided by the LA, e.g., SENTASS, Educational Psychology Service etc. and Health Service personnel have advised that the child needs to use hearing aids, a cochlear implant and /or other amplification systems.
- The child has difficulty accessing spoken communication and other auditory experiences.
- The child has difficulty accessing the language of the curriculum.

Hearing impairment may show itself in the following ways:

• Academic underachievement

• Delayed language development

• Delayed speech development

• Delayed development in communication skills

• The child being socially isolated and emotionally vulnerable

The preventative model of early intervention for pupils with hearing impairment enables many to make progress and achieve higher levels when support is provided.

School Action Plus may be indicated by:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A prima facie case based on appropriate evidence and documentation. In all cases this will be supported by specialist professional judgement related to direct knowledge of the pupil and school context.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The child having progressive loss, late onset or diagnosis or a significant hearing loss due to trauma (e.g. head injury) or following illness.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The child needing to use hearing aids, a cochlear implant and/or other amplification systems.

Visual Impairment

Evidence is required that:

- The child has a clinical diagnosis of a significant visual impairment.
- The child has a visual difficulty and requires additional specialist equipment and visits by a specialist service in order to make progress.

Visual Impairment may be indicated by:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty in accessing visual materials
--

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Academic underachievement

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slow progress in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty with mobility
--

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delay with self help skills

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social isolation and emotional vulnerability
--

Early Years School Action Plus may be indicated by:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A prima facie case based on appropriate evidence and documentation. In all cases this will be supported by specialist professional judgement related to direct knowledge of the pupil and the school context.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The child has difficulty access information presented visually.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The child needs to use corrective lenses or low vision aids (magnifiers, a monocular, CCTV etc.)
--

Evidence is required that:

- The child has a clinical diagnosis of a physical or medical impairment.
- External support services provided by the LA, e.g., SENTASS, Educational Psychology Service etc. and Health Service personnel have been consulted to provide more specialist assessments and give advice on the use of new or specialist strategies or materials.
- The child needs support for particular activities.

Physical and/or Medical impairments may be indicated by:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child not seeking interaction with adults and other children and young people.
--

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child needing a lot of support to stay on task.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child's speech is not easily understood by strangers.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child exhibiting secondary factors such as social, emotional and behavioural problems.
--

School Action Plus may be indicated by:

• Restricted mobility needs extra resource to enable curriculum/social access.

• Requirement for regular medical support that makes personnel/timetable demands.

• Requirement for oversight for intimate care.

• Requirement for curriculum to be differentiated to accommodate physical needs e.g. enlarged worksheets, use of IT etc.

Additional Support in Early Years

Statutory Assessment

Further information on how to initiate a statutory assessment can be found in Unit 5.

Parents/carers, schools and early years settings can make a request to the LA for a statutory assessment – the LA must then determine whether a statutory assessment is required.

If a child is **under the age of two** the LA may make an assessment of their educational needs but in such a manner as the authority considers appropriate. If a parent requests a statutory assessment of their child who is under two – the LA must make such an assessment.

If a child is **over two but under compulsory school age** the LA must consider the following before proceeding to statutory assessment:

- What difficulties have been identified by the setting?
- Have practitioners provided individualised strategies through Early Years Action and Early Years Action Plus?
- Has outside advice been sought regarding physical health and functioning, communication skills, perceptual and motor skills, self-help skills, social skills, emotional and behavioural development, responses to learning experiences and have parental views been considered?

The LA will then assess the evidence and make a decision about whether the child's difficulties should be addressed through a statement of special educational needs.

When a child under the age of 5 has a statement of special educational needs this must be reviewed at least twice a year.

Please see **Unit 5** for information on the statutory procedures from assessment through to annual review of a statement of special educational needs.

Supplementary Funding

It may be appropriate to apply for Supplementary Funding for a pupil transferring into reception from an Early Years Setting. **This would only apply to those pupils with complex needs, for whom previously it would have been necessary to initiate Statutory Assessment.**

Early Years Settings should hold Spring / early Summer term reviews before 31st May, as outlined earlier in this unit. The receiving school SENCO or representative(s) should be invited to attend. A decision should be made (involving a key colleague from SENTASS / EPS) as to whether an application for Supplementary Funding should be made in readiness for the child transferring to a reception class. Further information on how to apply for Supplementary Funding can be found in Unit 5.

Special Educational Needs Early Years Transfer: Policy and Guidelines

Within Newcastle we recognise how important it is for children and young people to move smoothly and successfully from home to pre school settings or to school. This transition period is significant for every child and family, but can be especially challenging if the youngsters concerned have needs likely to require special or additional support.

By the time a child reaches this transition point there will be many individuals who will know their needs well: parents/carers, professionals with a wide range of backgrounds and experiences and, of course, the children and young people themselves. We will collectively have good knowledge of their personalities, their likes and dislikes, their strengths and needs. There may be some collective understanding of strategies and approaches likely to enable these children and young people to make a smooth and successful transition into settings other than home, and there may also be some differences of opinion and perceptions.

Our instincts, borne out by all the literature that has been produced over the years on this subject, tell us that the more this information is shared and communicated early and in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, the more likely it is that individual children and young people will settle happily and successfully into their new environments.

This policy is based on the premise that the early sharing of parental and professional perceptions of children and young people's needs in a constructive, open and honest way will give children and young people their best chance of success in their future education. We should never forget that for the vast majority of children and young people it is their parents/carers who will be the individuals most likely to be continuously involved in their lives. How we engage with them in their children and young people's earliest years is likely to have an impact on their perception of professionals for the rest of their children and young people and young people's lives.

This guidance applies to all Early Years Settings:

Nursery classes in LA schools
Community Nursery Schools
Playgroups in receipt of Nursery Education Grants

Non-maintained Settings follow these Guidelines with the support of their Inclusion Worker or Area SENCO.

Rationale

To facilitate the smooth transition between early education and the greater formality of school, encouraging strong and clear links between Early Years Settings and schools, so children and young people can begin their primary education better equipped than ever before.

Aims

- To ensure transition between Early Years settings and primary / first schools is made as smoothly as possible.
- To develop strong, clear links between Early Years Settings and primary / first schools.
- To improve records transfer between Early Years settings and primary / first schools.
- To ensure that primary / first schools have as much information as possible about new intake pupils with Special Educational Needs.
- To enable primary / first schools to plan provision, as early as possible, for new intake pupils with Special Educational Needs.
- To enable primary / first schools to address access issues, as early as possible, for new intake pupils with Special Educational Needs.

Guidelines

- Early years settings will hold reviews to focus on phase transfer for children and young people with Special Educational Needs. These will be held in the Spring and Summer terms.
- Reviews will always address appropriateness of a new phase setting and the level of support required to make progress.
- Information from the reviews will be sent to receiving schools within ten working days, or as soon as the school placement is known.
- Schools will receive the records of all pupils identified in Early Years Settings as having special education needs. Transfer information will include the following:
 - Information and reports from services.
 - Any detailed background information.
 - Copies of IEPs / Individual Provision Maps and reviews.
 - Records of intervention through Early Years Action or Early Years Action Plus.

- Evidence of moderation at Early Years Action Plus, if appropriate (Validation sheet and COPC).
- Statements of Special Educational Needs.
- Any other appropriate documentation.
- Schools and settings will arrange liaison visits and attendance at reviews by a colleague from the receiving school.
- Ultimately responsibility for requesting information about a pupil rests with the receiving school, however liaison between settings will be most effective when schools and settings work together to ensure the best outcomes for the children and young people.
- Schools should be pro-active in seeking information from those settings that usually send pupils to them if they have not received information within the timescales set out below. Information may also be sought from parents/carers to identify their child's Early Years placement.
- Schools must consider the needs of prospective pupils when planning access for those with disabilities, including access to the curriculum. This applies not only for pupils known to have disabilities, but also for pupils who might attend the school.
- The following time-line will be followed to enable effective liaison within unavoidably tight time-scales.

Timelines and Responsibilities for Transfer from Early Years to School Setting

Responsibility –
**Early Years
Setting**

A review will be held in the Spring Term by the **15th March**. This will focus on the implications and appropriateness of a new phase setting. This can be done in general terms, as the receiving school will not be confirmed at this stage.



Responsibility –
**Early Years
Setting**

Pupil information, including the outcome of the Spring Term review and the relevant reports from Services, will be sent to receiving schools as soon as places are allocated. This will be done no later than **31st March**.



Responsibility –
**Early Years
Setting**

SENCOs in Early Years Settings will contact schools by **30th April** to arrange liaison visits and invite SENCOs to Summer Term reviews.



Responsibility –
Schools

If there has been no contact from Early Years Settings by **30th April**, schools will make contact to confirm whether there are any pupils with SEN. If necessary, arrange to visit and attend review(s).



Responsibility –
**Early Years
Setting**

Early Years Settings will hold Summer Term Reviews by **31st May**. Receiving school SENCO or representative(s) will be invited to attend.



Responsibility –
**Early Years
Setting**

Information from the above Review must be sent to schools within **10 working days**.



Responsibility –
Schools

Schools to contact Early Years Setting if they do not receive Review information by **15th June**

Managing Continence in Schools and Early Years Settings

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requires all education providers to re-examine all policies, consider the implications of the Act for practice and revise their current arrangements. In the light of historical practices that no longer comply with new legislation, changes will particularly be required wherever blanket rules about continence have been a feature of a setting/school's admissions policy. Schools and settings will also need to set in motion action that ensures they provide an accessible toileting facility if this has not previously been available. The Department of Health has issued clear guidance about the facilities that should be available in each school (Good Practice in Continence Services, 2000).

Achieving continence is one of hundreds of developmental milestones usually reached within the context of learning in the home before the child transfers to learning in a nursery/school setting. In some cases this one developmental area has assumed significance beyond all others. Parents/carers are sometimes made to feel guilty that this aspect of learning has not been achieved, whereas other delayed learning is not so stigmatising.

Definition of Disability in DDA

The DDA provides protection for anyone who has a physical, sensory or mental impairment that has an adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. The effect must be substantial and long-term.

It is clear therefore that anyone with a named condition that affects aspects of personal development must not be discriminated against. However, it is also unacceptable to refuse admission to other children and young people who are delayed in achieving continence. Delayed continence is not necessarily linked with learning difficulties. However, children and young people with global developmental delay which may not have been identified by the time they enter nursery or school are likely to be late coming out of nappies.

Education providers have an obligation to meet the needs of children and young people with delayed personal development in the same way as they would meet the individual needs of children and young people and young people with delayed language, or any other kind of delayed development. Children and young people should not be excluded from normal pre-school activities solely because of incontinence.

Any admission policy that sets a blanket standard of continence, or any other aspect of development, for all children and young people is discriminatory and therefore unlawful under the Act. All such issues have to be dealt with on an individual basis, and settings/schools are expected to make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of each child.

Schools and settings should consider the following issues:

Health and Safety

Schools and all other settings registered to provide education will already have Hygiene or Infection Control policies as part of their Health and Safety policy. This is a necessary statement of the procedures the setting/school will follow in case a child accidentally wets or soils him/herself, or is sick while on the premises. The same precautions will apply for nappy changing.

This is likely to include the following principles:

- Children and young people should be changed in privacy and treated with respect.
- Have a knowledge of and respect for any cultural or religious sensitivities related to aspects of intimate care.
- Speak to the child by name and ensure they are aware of the focus of the activity. Address the child in age appropriate ways.
- Reassure children and young people who need to be changed and help them to remain relaxed, comfortable and safe.
- Give explanations of what is happening in a straightforward and reassuring way.
- Agree terminology for parts of the body and bodily functions that will be used by staff and encourage children and young people to use these terms appropriately.
- Respect a child's preference for a particular sequence of care.
- Give strong clues that enable the child to anticipate and prepare for events e.g. show the clean nappy/pad to indicate the intention to change, or the sponge/flannel for washing.
- Encourage the child's to undertake as much of the procedure for themselves as possible, including washing intimate areas and dressing/undressing.
- Seek the child's permission before undressing if he/she is unable to do this unaided.
- Children and young people should be changed as soon as necessary. Staff should inform appropriate colleagues when intimate care is necessary.
- Children and young people should never be left unattended in the changing area.
- Only creams supplied by the parent/carer should be applied.

- Staff should wear a fresh pair of disposable gloves and an apron when changing children and young people.
- Changing surfaces should be disinfected after each change and health and safety regarded at all times.
- Soiled nappies must be double wrapped, or placed in a hygienic disposal unit.
- Hot water and liquid soap available to wash hands as soon as the task is completed.
- Hot air dryer or paper towels available for drying hands.
- Keep records noting responses to intimate care and any changes of behaviour.

Asking parents/carers of a child to come and change a child is likely to be a direct contravention of the DDA, and leaving a child in a soiled nappy for any length of time pending the return of the parent is a form of abuse.

Facilities

Playgroups and schools are now admitting younger children and young people, some of whom who, by virtue of their immaturity, are likely to have occasional accidents, especially in the first few months after admission.

Current DfES recommendations for purpose built foundation stage units include an area for changing and showering children and young people in order to meet the personal development needs of children and young people. There is also evidence that there is a trend for the parents/carers of children and young people with more complex needs to request a place for their child in a mainstream school. A suitable place for changing children and young people therefore, should have a high priority in any setting's/school's Access Plan.

The Department of Health recommends that one extended cubicle with a washbasin should be provided in each school for children and young people with disabilities. If it is not possible to provide a purpose built changing area, then it is possible to purchase a changing mat, and change the child on the floor or on another suitable surface. A 'Do not enter' sign (visually illustrated) can be placed on the toilet door to ensure that privacy and dignity are maintained during the time taken to change the child. Clean, fresh water drinking facilities should be available at all times.

Child Protection

The normal process of changing a nappy should not raise child protection concerns, and there are no regulations that indicate that a second member of staff must be available to supervise the nappy changing process to ensure that abuse does not take place. Few setting/schools will have the staffing

resources to provide two members of staff for nappy changing and CRB checks are carried out to ensure the safety of children and young people with staff employed in childcare and education settings. If there is known risk of false allegation by a child then a single practitioner should not undertake nappy changing. A student on placement should not change a nappy unsupervised. Setting/school managers are encouraged to remain highly vigilant for any signs or symptom of improper practice, as they do for all activities carried out on site.

Agreeing a Procedure for Personal Care in your Setting/School

Settings/schools should have clear written guidelines for staff to follow when changing a child, to ensure that staff follow correct procedures and are not worried about false accusations of abuse. Parents/carers should be aware of the procedures the school will follow should their child need changing during school time.

Your written guidelines will specify:

- Who will change the nappy
- Where nappy changing will take place
- What resources will be used (Cleansing agents used or cream to be applied?)
- How the nappy will be disposed of
- What infection control measures are in place
- What the staff member will do if the child is unduly distressed by the experience or if the staff member notices marks or injuries

Schools may also need to consider the possibility of special circumstances arising, should a child with complex continence needs be admitted. In such circumstances the appropriate health care professional will need to be closely involved in forward planning.

Resources

Depending on the accessibility and convenience of a setting/school's facilities, it could take ten minutes or more to change an individual child. This is not dissimilar to the amount of time that might be allocated to work with a child on an individual learning target, and of course, the time spent changing the child can be a positive, learning time.

Job Descriptions

It is likely that most of the personal care will be undertaken by one of the teaching assistants on staff. There are some schools where teachers also take a turn with this task, but we recognise that this does not often happen. Occasionally a setting/school will say that offering personal care is not in the job descriptions of their teaching assistants. It is hard to believe how this could be the case for any assistant working with young children and young people, and we would recommend that this be included at the next review. Certainly

any new posts should have offering personal care to promote independent toileting and other self-care skills as one of the tasks.

Keys to Success

It is not helpful to assume that the child has failed to achieve full continence because the parent hasn't bothered to try. There are very few parents/carers for whom this would be true. In the unlikely event this is the only reason why the child has not become continent then continence achievement should be uncomplicated if a positive and structured approach is used.

Remember that delayed continence may be linked with delays in other aspects of the child's development, and will benefit from a planned programme worked out in partnership with the child's parents/carers.

There are other professionals who can help with advice and support. The School Nurse or Family Health Visitors have expertise in this area and can support parents/carers to implement toilet training programmes in the home. Health care professionals can also carry out a full health assessment in order to rule out any medical cause of continence problems. The Specialist Community Child Health Services has produced a helpful publication 'Toileting Issues for Schools and Nurseries', which you may send for (See Further Information and Guidance) to get additional information on continence issues.

Parents/carers are more likely to be open about their concerns about their child's learning and development and seek help, if they are confident that they and their child are not going to be judged for the child's delayed learning.

Partnership Working

In some circumstances it may be appropriate for the setting/school to set up a homesetting/school agreement that defines the responsibilities that each partner has, and the expectations each has for the other. This might include:

The parent:

- Agreeing to ensure that the child is changed at the latest possible time before being brought to the setting/school
- Providing the setting/school with spare nappies and a change of clothing
- Understanding and agreeing the procedures that will be followed when their child is changed at school –including the use of any cleanser or the application of any cream
- Agreeing to inform the setting/school should the child have any marks/rash
- Agreeing to a 'minimum change' policy i.e. the setting/school would not undertake to change the child more frequently than if she/he were at home.
- Agreeing to review arrangements should this be necessary

The school:

- Agreeing to change the child during a single session should the child soil themselves or become uncomfortably wet
- Agreeing how often the child would be changed should the child be staying for the full day
- Agreeing to monitor the number of times the child is changed in order to identify progress made
- Agreeing to report should the child be distressed, or if marks/rashes are seen
- Agreeing to review arrangements should this be necessary.

This kind of agreement should help to avoid misunderstandings that might otherwise arise, and help parents/carers feel confident that the setting/school is taking a holistic view of the child's needs.

Further Information and guidance on Intimate Care Policy available from Education Welfare Service section of the Newcastle upon Tyne Website www.newcastle.gov.uk