

What to expect in an EHC Plan for autistic children

In this article [Education Advocacy](#) offer their insight into what to expect in an EHC Plan for autistic children.

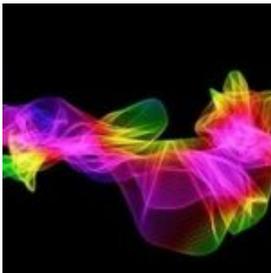
The four broad areas of special educational needs

If you have succeeded in securing an EHC Plan for your child, that is only the starting point. There is a huge difference between what a Local Authority will write in an EHC Plan and what is required by law; the latter is what you need!

There are four broad areas of special educational needs, and it is often the case for those children with a [diagnosis of autism](#), that all four areas will be relevant. This means their educational needs in this area and the provision to meet those needs should be accurately described in their EHC Plan and specific and quantified provision detailed too.

The four broad areas are:

- Communication and interaction
- Cognition and learning
- Social, emotional and mental health difficulties
- Sensory and/or physical needs



Section B of the EHC Plan

Section B of the EHC Plan (see [What is an Education Health and Care Plan?](#)) may be written with the above headings; these are educational needs in Section B.

Examples of Section B needs for a child with a diagnosis of autism might include:

- Difficulty interacting with his/her peers
- Solitary play
- Difficulty turn-taking and understanding social rules
- Difficulty following instructions

- Rigid thinking
- Repetitive behaviours
- Echolalia (repetitive speech)
- Disordered speech
- Difficulty interpreting verbal and nonverbal language
- Delayed gross and fine motor skills
- Poor balance and coordination
- Difficulty with time management, organisation, planning
- Sensory overload - seeking out sensory stimulation or avoiding
- Highly anxious, with behaviours that challenge
- Difficulty expressing their emotions and understanding the emotions and needs of others

This is not an exhaustive list, but it is essential that all the educational needs are described, and you can see how they fit with the four broad areas of SEN described above.

The accurate description of needs is essential to inform the educational provision in Section F of the EHC Plan. Without a Section F that details specific, quantified and specialist provision, it is often the case that provision is inadequate, inappropriate and insufficient.



Section F of the EHC Plan

Section F is enforceable by law; it is possibly the most important section of an EHC Plan, and it is provision that must be provided – no excuses.

The provision in Section F of an EHC Plan is then dictated by those needs described in Section B and there must be specific and quantified provision in Section F for all of those needs in Section B. Unfortunately, this is often where the Local Authority will try to avoid it's required, legal duty to specify the provision. For example, Section B may describe difficulties with interacting with peers, understanding social rules, echolalia, difficulty interpreting verbal and nonverbal language. In section F it will then likely state something like this:

“Hannah may benefit from weekly small group work to develop her social communication skills and some daily intervention from a Learning Support Assistant”.

What it should say, to be specific and quantified is:

“Hannah will require a weekly small group (no more than 5 students) to develop her social communication. The group session will be a minimum of 30 minutes and delivered by a Speech and Language Therapist, who will then design a programme to be delivered for 15 minutes each day, on a 1:1 basis, by a HLTA (Higher Level Teaching Assistant) who will also sit in on the weekly group”.

Similarly, if your child has sensory difficulties or difficulties with gross and fine motor skills, co-ordination, balance, visual processing, or handwriting; there should be provision from an Occupational Therapist. But what we often see in Section F is something like this:

“Hannah has difficulties with sensory seeking behaviours and all staff need to be aware of these difficulties. She may also benefit from the use of ear defenders and other equipment, as recommended, to reduce sensory overload”.

What this actually means for the child is really anyone’s guess! **What we would expect and what is legally required is provision that is specified and quantified. For example:**

“Hannah will require a weekly session of Occupational Therapy, to be delivered by an Occupational Therapist who has received additional training in Sensory Integration Therapy. The session should be a minimum of 45 minutes and delivered on a 1:1 basis. The Therapist should also devise a programme of activities that should be delivered daily for 30 minutes, delivered by the Higher-Level Teaching Assistant on a 1:1 basis.

The Therapist should also provide one hour of training per term for all staff who work with Hannah”.

Other provisions in Section F could include music therapy, rebound therapy, play therapy, a quantified number of hours of support; input from a dietician, an Autism Specialist Teacher; training for staff working with your child, including accredited training. Specialist equipment, software, alternative methods of recording their work, exemptions from the curriculum and the list can go on. There is so much more than can be included in Section F.



Health and social care sections of the EHC Plan

Other sections of the EHC Plan should not be overlooked, specifically the health and social care

sections. During the EHC needs assessment, advice and information should have been obtained from health and social care, there are often needs and provision that apply in these sections too, especially for those with a diagnosis of autism.

In our experience, the provision generally offered as a result of social care and health care assessments are minimal, whereas you can expect much more, depending on the needs of your child. For example:

- Support for your child to access social and leisure activities in the community; with a support worker to allow you some respite
- Advice and counselling
- Help in the home
- Short breaks (respite)
- Equipment and adaptations in the home
- Support for independent living

Know your rights

You should set your goals high for the contents of an EHC Plan. It won't happen easily, but you should know your rights and know that great things can be achieved – an EHC Plan that includes yoga sessions and driving lessons. Use your imagination as your starting point.....

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If you need support in getting a specialist independent placement for an autistic child or young adult, we can help. Click below for our Autism Schools and Colleges Placement Support Service.

