

## Mental Health Difficulties in Education

### Introduction

This information is about how schools, colleges and local authorities can and should support children and young people with mental health needs in school.

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### 1. When mental health difficulties affect a child or young person's progress in education

If a child or young person's mental health difficulties become a barrier to learning they may need special educational provision. This is known as special educational needs support (SEN Support). It can be helpful to discuss with your child's school whether they consider your child to have special educational needs (SEN) and whether they are receiving SEN support.

## How do I know when a mental health need is a special educational need (SEN)?

The SEND Code of Practice states that:

A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:

- Has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or
- Has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions

The Department for Education's 'Mental Health and Behaviour Guidance for Schools', March 2016 says:

*"A wide range of problems might require special provision to be made which could manifest as difficulties, such as problems of mood (anxiety or depression), problems of conduct (oppositional problems and more severe conduct problems including aggression), self-harming, substance abuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Some children and young people may have other recognised disorders such as attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD), attachment disorder, autism or pervasive developmental disorder, an anxiety disorder, a disruptive disorder or, rarely, schizophrenia or bipolar disorder."*

When schools are considering whether a child or young person may have SEN, or where a parent has a concern about their child's progress, the school should carry out assessments to determine whether there are any causal factors such as undiagnosed learning difficulties, communication difficulties or mental health issues. In addition they should consider whether the child

has subsequent needs which fall within the following four broad areas of need (SEND Code of Practice 2015):

1. Communication and interaction
2. Cognition and learning
- 3. Social, emotional and mental health**
4. Sensory and/or physical

## 2. What schools or colleges can and should do to help

There are a number of different things a school can do to support children/young people with mental health needs:

- If a child/young person is considered to have SEN then the school should provide a package of support that is regularly reviewed. Please see our resource <https://www.cornwallsendiass.org.uk/information-resource-centre/sen-support/> for further information.
- Children/young people may be offered pastoral care that may need to go beyond that offered to other students e.g. counselling.
- Children/young people may have an individual health care plan (IHCP) detailing the support they need to meet their medical needs in school. These are often written by a school nurse using advice from medical professionals.

## Legislation

When planning support for a child with mental health needs schools must consider:

[The Children and Families Act 2014](#)

[The Special Educational Needs and Disability \(SEND\) Code of Practice 2015](#)

## SEN Support for students with mental health needs:

Having a diagnosis of a mental health condition does not automatically mean that a child or young person requires special provision to be made.

However, the Department for Education's 'Mental health and behaviour guidance for schools', March 2016 says:

*"Persistent mental health difficulties may lead to pupils having significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of those of the same age. Schools should consider whether the child will benefit from being identified as having a special educational need (SEN). Any special education provision should ensure it takes into account the views and wishes of the child and their family."*

Where schools recognise a child's mental health is in need of special provision, this provision can be made in a variety of ways such as pastoral care including counselling sessions, involve the support of specialist staff or support services but in any event it should go beyond the differentiated approaches and learning arrangements normally provided as part of high quality, personalised teaching.

The Department for Education issued guidance to schools on how to set up counselling services for pupils which can be found here:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/497825/Counselling\\_in\\_schools.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/497825/Counselling_in_schools.pdf)

## Supporting Students with Medical Conditions in Schools

Where a school determines that a child with a mental health issue does not need SEN provision to be made, remember that mental health conditions are still considered to be medical conditions.

Statutory guidance, 'Supporting pupils with medical conditions in schools' 2015 states that:

*"Schools, local authorities, health professionals, commissioners and other support services should work together to ensure that children with medical conditions receive a full education. In some cases this will require flexibility and involve, for example, programmes of study that rely on part-time attendance at school in combination with alternative provision arranged by the local authority".*

## 2. When mental health issues affect a child/young person's attendance.

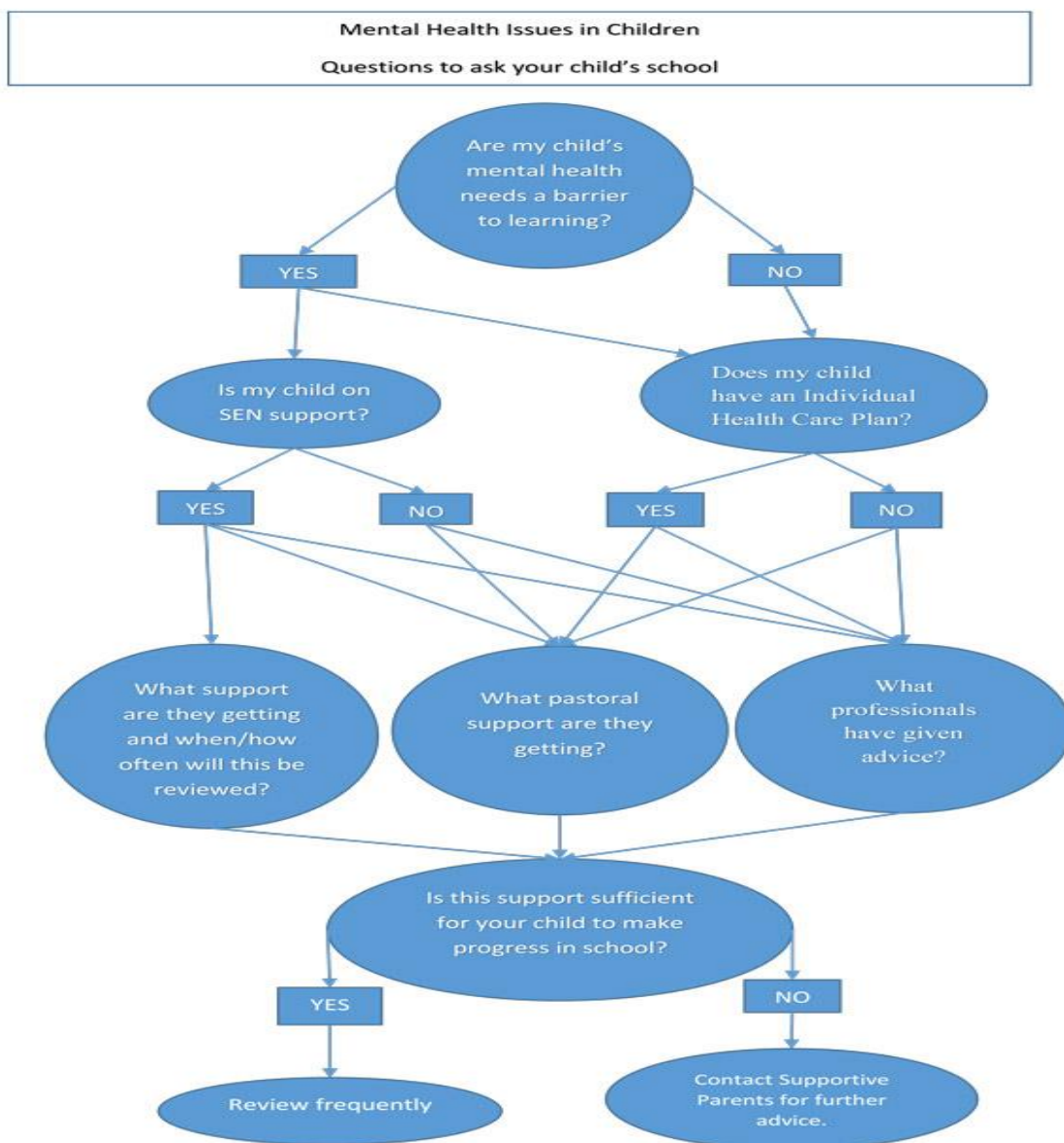
Children with mental health difficulties may miss school due to appointments, episodes of poor health or anxiety based school refusal. Your child's school should help to plan support that can reduce the amount of time missed and help your child catch up. Reintegration back into school should be properly supported so that children with medical conditions fully engage with learning and do not fall behind when they are unable to attend. Appropriate support should be put in place to limit the impact on the child's educational attainment and emotional and general wellbeing (SEND Code of Practice 2015 section 10.47).

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure that there are alternative arrangements for schools to access, to ensure that pupils who can no longer access school full time for medical reasons can have educational provision made for them (SEND Code of Practice 2015 section 10.39). Alternative Provision should usually be temporary with a plan to reintegrate your child as soon as possible. Schools should be ready to make arrangements under this duty when it is clear that a child will be away from school for 15 days or more because of health needs (Supporting pupils with medical conditions in schools).

## 4. Individual Health Care Plans

Schools/ colleges may create individual health care plans (IHCP) to support children/young people in education settings. These plans identify a child/young person's health care needs, which staff will meet these needs, and any training that staff may need. They should be written using advice from relevant professionals e.g. Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) professionals. Guidance for writing IHCP's is available on page 28 of '[Supporting pupils with medical conditions in schools](#)'.

### Flow Chart – Questions to Ask School/College



## 5. Further Support

The following organisations may be helpful:

- <https://camhs.mpft.nhs.uk/beeu>
- <https://kooth.com/>
- <https://youngminds.org.uk/>

### Any questions?

If you are still unclear or have any questions about any information in this document or about any other aspect of Special Educational Needs & Disabilities, please contact a member of our team.

Contact **Telford and Wrekin SENDIASS** for information, advice and support:

Phone: 01952 457176

Email: [info@iass.org.uk](mailto:info@iass.org.uk)