



EHCP SUPPORT SERIES

Chapter 3

Writing the Parent/Carer Contribution

Turning what you know about your child into a clear, balanced contribution that reflects their strengths, needs and everyday experience.

Your knowledge matters

You see parts of your child's life that professionals may not. Your contribution can add context to reports, explain what support looks like in everyday life and help keep your child's identity, experiences and aspirations visible throughout the EHCP process.



Why Your Contribution Matters

The EHCP process should be person-centred. Local authorities must have regard to the views, wishes and feelings of the child and their parent, or the young person, and support them to participate as fully as possible in decisions (Children and Families Act 2014, s.19).

Key fact

During assessment and EHC plan preparation, the local authority must consult the child and their parent, or the young person. The SEND Code of Practice says the individual's needs should sit at the heart of assessment and planning (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015, paras 9.20-9.22).

What can a parent/carer contribution add?

The wider picture

How your child manages before and after school, at home, in the community and during transitions.

Patterns over time

Changes, recurring difficulties, recovery after demands and things that may not be visible during a short observation.

What helps

Strategies, environments, communication approaches and adjustments that make a noticeable difference.

Your child's individuality

Strengths, interests, preferences, relationships, personality and aspirations - not only areas of difficulty.

Study note

Government research into EHC plans found that targeted prompts about strengths, interests, what works and future wishes could support fuller parent contributions and stronger person-centred planning (Department for Education, 2018).



Describe the Whole Child

It can be easy for forms to become a list of difficulties. Beginning with the whole child helps the reader understand who they are, what matters to them and the context in which their needs occur.

Strengths and interests

What do they enjoy? What motivates them? What are they proud of or particularly good at?

Communication

How do they understand and express themselves? What helps them communicate? Are there differences when tired, anxious or overwhelmed?

Learning and participation

What helps them engage, process information, begin tasks, sustain attention or show what they know?

Sensory and physical needs

Are there sensory, motor, medical, pain, fatigue, eating, toileting or environmental factors that affect education?

Emotional wellbeing and regulation

What situations are difficult? What signs show distress or overload? What helps with regulation, predictability and recovery?

Independence and daily life

What support is needed with routines, transitions, organisation, safety, self-care, travel or making choices?

Keep the strengths in

A strengths-based description does not minimise need. It gives a fuller picture and can help identify approaches that build on what already engages and supports your child.



Make Needs Clear and Specific

Specific examples help turn broad descriptions into information that can be understood and acted on. Where possible, describe **what happens, when it happens, the impact and what support is needed**.

Instead of only writing...

“They struggle with transitions.”

You might add: transitions are particularly difficult when plans change without warning. They may stop speaking, become unable to move to the next activity and need a familiar adult, visual information and additional processing time before they can continue.

A useful four-part structure

1. Situation

When or where does this tend to happen?

2. Observable experience

What do you notice? Include communication, behaviour, physical signs or withdrawal without assuming motive.

3. Impact

How does this affect access to education, participation, wellbeing, independence or recovery?

4. Support

What helps, what has been tried and what level of support is needed?

In practice

If needs look different at home and school, describe both. Differences between settings can be useful information rather than evidence that one account must be wrong.



What Works - and What Doesn't?

Your contribution can show not only what is difficult, but what changes when the right support is present. This can help connect identified needs with the provision that may be required.

What helps

- Predictable routines or advance warning
- Visual or written information
- Reduced language or extra processing time
- Movement, sensory or regulation breaks
- A trusted adult or quieter environment

What is not enough

- Support that is inconsistent
- Strategies used only after distress escalates
- Adjustments that depend on one member of staff
- Expectations that increase overload
- Provision that does not match assessed need

Study note

The SEND Code of Practice expects assessment and planning to focus on the child or young person as an individual and to consider their aspirations, outcomes and the support needed to achieve them. Parent knowledge can help explain how support works across different contexts (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015).

A helpful question to ask yourself

If someone had never met my child, would this contribution help them understand both what my child can do and what support they need to access education safely and meaningfully?



Hopes, Wishes and the Future

A parent/carer contribution can also describe what you hope education and support will make possible. Aspirations do not need to be limited to academic attainment; they can include communication, wellbeing, relationships, independence, belonging and future participation.

Section A

EHC plans include a section for the views, interests and aspirations of the child and their parents, or the young person. The contribution should complement - not replace - the child or young person's own views and preferred ways of expressing them.

Prompts you might consider

- What would I like my child to feel more confident or secure doing?
- What relationships, interests or activities are important to them?
- What would greater independence look like for this particular child?
- What would meaningful participation in education look like?
- What do I hope the right support will make possible over the next few years?
- What does my child communicate - verbally or otherwise - about what matters to them?

Communication can look different

A child's views may be expressed through speech, AAC, signs, behaviour, choices, drawings, photographs or other supported methods. The method should fit the individual rather than requiring one particular form of communication.



Plan My Contribution

Use these larger spaces to gather ideas before writing your final contribution. Notes do not need to be polished - this page is for capturing what matters.

My child's strengths, interests and personality

The most important needs I want understood

What daily life shows that reports may not capture

What helps - and what is currently not enough

My hopes and priorities for the future



A Final Check Before You Submit

There is no single 'perfect' parent/carer contribution. Before submitting yours, check whether it gives a clear, recognisable picture of your child and the support they need.

☐ Have I included strengths and interests, not only difficulties?

☐ Have I explained needs using specific examples where possible?

☐ Have I described the impact on education, participation or daily life?

☐ Have I explained what support helps and what is currently insufficient?

☐ Have I included my child's views or explained how they communicate them?

☐ Have I included aspirations and what I hope the right support will enable?

☐ Have I distinguished what I have observed from anything I am unsure about?

Keep a copy

Save the version you submit. It can be useful when checking the draft EHC plan later to see whether important information, views and aspirations have been reflected accurately.



References & Further Support

About this guide

This resource concerns the SEND/EHCP system in **England**. It provides educational information rather than individual legal advice. Check current legislation and statutory guidance when acting in a specific case.

Harvard references

Department for Education and Department of Health (2015) *Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years*. London: Department for Education. Available at: GOV.UK (Accessed: 22 September 2026).

Department for Education (2018) *Education, Health and Care plans: A qualitative investigation into service user experiences of the planning process*. London: Department for Education.

Great Britain (2014) *Children and Families Act 2014*. London: The Stationery Office. See Part 3, particularly section 19.

Further support

- **SENDIASS** - free and impartial information, advice and support for children and young people with SEND and their parents/carers.
- **GOV.UK SEND Code of Practice** - statutory guidance for the SEND system in England.
- **Your local authority's Local Offer** - local EHCP forms, guidance and SEND services.

Next in the series

Chapter 4: Gathering Evidence - What Should I Include? A practical guide to choosing, organising and explaining evidence without feeling that every document must be included.