

Supporting pupils with healthcare needs

This factsheet explains:

- your child's rights to an education and extra support to learn
- how schools, nurseries, local authorities and NHS boards should meet your child's healthcare needs
- what you can do if you think your child's healthcare needs are not being met.

Education and support for pupils with healthcare needs

Education and support for learning

Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), all children have the right to an education and to have an opinion that is listened to and taken into account. This includes being listened to in decisions about their education and about their healthcare.

Scottish law¹ says that every child of school age has a right to an education that helps them develop their abilities to their fullest potential.

If a pupil needs extra help to benefit fully from their education for any reason, they are said to have 'additional support needs'. Pupils with additional support needs have the right to the support they need at nursery or school². The support they get should be based on their individual needs. Find out more in our factsheet on [Additional support for learning: key facts](#).

If your child needs extra help at school or nursery because of a healthcare need or for any other reason, they have a right to receive support that will help them get the most from their education.

¹Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000

²Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended

Wellbeing

All professionals working with your child have responsibilities under the Scottish Government's Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) programme. They should protect and support your child's wellbeing, using the eight 'wellbeing indicators' to assess how they are doing: safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included.

All staff should keep your child's wellbeing at the heart of any decisions they make about their support.

Find out more in our factsheet on [Inclusion, equality and wellbeing](#).

Disabled pupils

If your child is disabled, they have rights under equality law³. It is against the law for schools, nurseries or local authorities to discriminate against a pupil for a reason related to their disability.

Schools, nurseries and local authorities must also make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled pupils to avoid them being disadvantaged and to help them be fully involved in all aspects of school life.

Find out more in our factsheet on [Disabled pupils and the law](#).

Who is responsible for making sure my child gets the support they need at school or nursery?

Providing an education and additional support for learning

Local authorities, through their schools and nurseries, are responsible for:

- providing education for pupils living in their area
- identifying which pupils have additional support needs
- identifying the particular support needs of these pupils
- providing these pupils with "adequate and efficient" support based on their individual needs.

Other agencies, such as NHS Boards, must help local authorities to meet these duties if they are asked to. For example, local authorities can ask health professionals to assess the needs of pupils with health conditions and give advice on the support they need with their learning.

³The Equality Act 2010

If the local authority asks an NHS Board for help, they must respond to the request unless it will conflict with their own role or legal duties. If a request for help is refused, it is up to the local authority to make arrangements for support to be put in place. This can either happen through negotiation with the NHS Board or by providing the support themselves.

Meeting healthcare needs

The head teacher of your child's school or nursery, in partnership with the local authority and NHS Board, is responsible for making sure your child has the support they need.

Your child's school or nursery should have a policy for meeting the healthcare needs of their pupils, which it should share with the family when your child first starts at the school or nursery. This policy should include details of:

- who has overall responsibility for supporting pupils' healthcare needs
- who is responsible for training the staff responsible for supporting children with healthcare needs and other relevant staff
- emergency procedures that may be required
- any medicines or medical equipment stored at the school or nursery.

The day-to-day responsibility for supporting your child's healthcare needs is likely to lie with school or nursery support staff. Depending on your child's needs, this may sometimes include health staff.

The NHS Board area you live in may have a health team that will support your child in school or nursery. This may include health staff such as doctors, nurses, clinical psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists or community nurses.

The health team should work in partnership with schools and nurseries to support pupils with healthcare needs and provide advice and guidance to staff who are supporting them. This may include training of pupil support staff. The way this is arranged will vary between different NHS Board and local authority areas.

How will I be involved?

You should provide relevant information to the school or nursery about your child's healthcare needs, including any conditions they have and medication they need to take.

The local authority, through your child's school or nursery, must seek and take account of your views (and where possible your child's views) when they are assessing whether your child needs extra help and when deciding what support they should receive.

You are also responsible for making sure your child attends school if they are well enough to do so.

How will my child be involved?

Your child has the right to be listened to and have their views taken seriously by all working with them, both at school or nursery and in healthcare settings. Your child's wellbeing should be at the centre of all decisions.

Your child's views must be taken into account when their needs are being assessed and when decisions are made about the support they will have.

If your child needs extra help to communicate their views, specific arrangements should be made to give them the opportunity to express what they want and need.

How should my child's school or nursery support their healthcare needs?

Pupils with healthcare needs may need a package of additional support to help them get the most from school or nursery. Depending on your child's health issues, the support they need might include:

- help to take medication
- help to manage a chronic condition
- a quiet space to rest during the day
- extra time to finish tasks
- help to use the toilet or perform a medical procedure.

The school or nursery may also need to provide support to avoid emergencies (such as an allergic reaction) or to react quickly and suitably if one occurs.

The type and amount of support that your child receives should be based on your child's individual needs.

Guidance to help schools, nurseries, local authorities and NHS Boards to support children with healthcare needs says that ‘the rights, wellbeing, needs and circumstances of the individual child should, at all times, be at the heart of decision-making’. See ‘**Where can I find out more?**’ at the end of this factsheet for a link to this guidance.

Providing intimate care (for example help with toileting)

Some pupils need help to carry out medical procedures or use the toilet. If your child needs intimate care, arrangements should be included in your child’s healthcare plan (see ‘**How will my child’s healthcare support be planned?**’). If your child needs help from an adult, it should be someone they know and trust. Staff who provide intimate care should receive suitable training. Your child’s school or nursery should provide intimate care in a way that respects your child’s privacy, dignity and rights.

Supporting pupils to take medication

Your child’s school or nursery should have a policy that explains the arrangements for supporting pupils who need to take medication when they are there. The school or nursery should discuss with you the best arrangements for them to receive, store and administer medicine for your child. They should ask you for written consent to give your child medicine.

The school or nursery must have a named member of staff responsible for making sure your child takes their medication and overseeing its storage. Two adults should be present when your child is taking their medicine to check they take the correct medicine and dosage.

It is good practice to encourage pupils to manage their own health needs, including taking medication. If this is appropriate, your child’s understanding of and ability to do this should be assessed. If your child can take their own medication, the school or nursery may carry out a risk assessment to make sure there is no risk to other pupils if your child keeps their own medicine. If medication is stored at school or nursery, all staff should know how to access it for your child.

You should keep the school or nursery up to date with any changes to your child’s medication, dosage etc. It is helpful to tell them about any side effects your child may experience, so they can provide support if needed.

If your child refuses to take medication, the school or nursery should contact you immediately and get advice from your child’s GP if they cannot reach you. School or nursery staff should always contact you or a suitable health professional if they have any doubts about giving medication to your child.

There is more detailed information about the use of specific medication in the Scottish Government’s guidance. See the end of this factsheet for the link.

Providing specialist healthcare and support

Many pupils with complex health conditions will go to mainstream schools or nurseries. Others might attend support bases or units attached to mainstream schools and some will attend special schools. In all these settings, pupils have the right to the additional help they need.

Some pupils' health needs may require specialist knowledge and skills such as support for those who need tube feeding or have a catheter or tracheostomy tube in place.

Wherever possible, local authorities and NHS Boards must work together to make sure arrangements are in place to meet the healthcare needs of the pupils they are responsible for.

Depending on your child's needs, a member of staff with suitable skills may be employed to support your child, or an existing member of staff may offer to do this. It is important that **all** staff who may support your child receive suitable training. Specialist staff from the health board may provide this training.

The school or nursery should have a plan for supporting your child if their usual trained support staff are unavailable or off sick.

The school or nursery should not expect you or other family members to provide healthcare support to your child when they are at school or nursery. Sometimes this may be unavoidable, but it should only happen in exceptional circumstances.

The school or nursery may ask you to give information or train staff to help them support your child.

If no member of staff is willing or able to support your child, the NHS Board and local authority are responsible for working together to resolve the issue.

Supporting your child during outings and activities

Your child's school or nursery should take account of your child's needs when planning outings or activities. They may need to carry out risk assessments to make sure adequate support is in place. Staff should also consider what the procedures will be if an emergency occurs while your child is taking part in an activity or outing.

The school or nursery must make 'reasonable adjustments' to make sure they are not putting your child at a disadvantage if they are disabled. For example, a school may need to make sure a member of staff who knows how to give your child their medication or provide intimate care goes on a school trip with your child. Find out more in our factsheet on [Disabled pupils and the law](#).

How will my child's healthcare support be planned?

Healthcare plan

Your child may have a specialist healthcare plan setting out their treatment and medication. If their healthcare needs affect their ability to attend school or nursery or to learn, they should have a school or nursery healthcare plan drawn up in partnership with health staff. You and your child should be fully involved in preparing their healthcare plan.

A health professional should decide whether your child needs a healthcare plan. This could be a member of the health team, a community paediatrician or children's nurse.

The healthcare plan should include details of:

- your child's healthcare needs and their impact
- the type and dosage of any medication your child must take, and storage information
- any side effects your child might experience and how to deal with them
- any healthcare procedures your child requires
- learning support needs resulting from their condition
- who is providing your child's support
- emergency procedures and contacts
- consent to share information
- how often and when the plan should be reviewed.

The plan should also include the name of the person responsible for updating it.

If your child does not have a healthcare plan but you think they should, speak to the head teacher or a member of your child's health team about preparing one.

Other plans

If your child needs additional support with their learning as a result of their healthcare needs, or for any other reason, the school or nursery may use a learning support plan to help monitor their progress and review their support. Find out more in our factsheet on [Planning your child's support](#).

If your child has complex or multiple additional support needs that are expected to last at least a year, and they need significant support from education and another agency (like health or social work), they may have a co-ordinated support plan (CSP). A CSP aims to help all the professionals that support a pupil to work together.

Find out more in our factsheet on [Co-ordinated support plans](#).

What should happen when my child starts or moves school?

When your child first starts school and when they move schools, the transition should be planned well in advance. This helps to make sure that:

- information about their healthcare needs can be passed on to the new school
- arrangements for providing the support your child needs can be in place when they start at their new school
- any support your child needs to manage the transition can be arranged.

Some pupils with healthcare needs might benefit from an 'enhanced transition'. This means additional activities to help them and those supporting them to prepare for the move. This can include:

- settling-in days
- opportunities to meet the staff they will be working with
- joint meetings between parents, the school, health professionals and the child (if appropriate).

You should be involved in the transition planning process and given the opportunity to share your views about the support your child will need.

Find out more in our factsheets on [Planning for starting school](#) and [Planning for moving to high school](#).

My child has recently been diagnosed with a health condition. What should I do?

You should ask for a meeting with your child's school or nursery as soon as possible to discuss the support your child will need.

Depending on your child's needs, it may be helpful to ask the health professionals supporting your child to attend.

When you attend the meeting, take along any information you have that will help the school or nursery understand your child's needs. This may include:

- assessment letters
- your child's health plan if they have one
- leaflets or other information about your child's health condition if appropriate.

During discussions with your child's school or nursery it is important to agree:

- how your child's needs will be met on a day-to-day basis
- procedures if an emergency arises or your child becomes unwell, including arrangements for notifying you and any other relevant health professionals
- how all staff can be made aware of your child's needs and how they should respond in an emergency.

If it is likely that your child will need some time off to attend health appointments, or because they are not likely to be well enough to attend, you can also discuss the support your child will need to keep up with their work and return after absences.

My child is missing school due to their health condition

Your child has a right to an education, even if they are too unwell to attend school. If your child is unable to attend for a long period, or has a lot of regular absences, the local authority, through the school or nursery, must make alternative arrangements so that they can carry on learning.

The right to continue learning applies to pupils with health conditions as well as those who may be too unwell to attend school or nursery due to an accident, trauma or mental health issue.

Find out more in our factsheet on [When your child is too unwell to go to school](#).

What can I do if I think my child's healthcare needs are not being met?

If you are worried that your child has support needs, including healthcare needs, that have not been identified, you can ask for your child's needs to be assessed. You should start by asking the school or nursery, but you also have the right to make a formal request to the local authority. If your child is 12 or older, they may be able to make the request themselves if they understand how to. Find out more in our factsheet on [Identifying and assessing your child's needs](#).

If you have concerns about the support your child is receiving, talk to the person responsible for additional support for learning at the school or nursery. This might be the head of pupil support, or the deputy or head teacher. If your concerns are not urgent, you can raise them at your child's next planning meeting.

If you are not satisfied with the way the school or nursery has dealt with your concerns, you can write to the head teacher. If you are not happy with their response, you can get in touch with the person responsible for additional support for learning at the local authority. You can find the person to speak to on our website www.enquire.org.uk/local-authorities.

There are further steps you can take if you need to. Find out more in our factsheet on [Avoiding and solving problems](#).

Where can I find out more?

Supporting children and young people with healthcare needs in school (2017)
www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-children-young-people-healthcare-needs-schools

This is the Scottish Government's guidance that explains the responsibilities of local authorities, schools, nurseries and NHS boards in meeting the healthcare needs of pupils.

Children's Health Scotland www.childrenshealthscotland.org

Tel: 0131 553 6553 Email: enquiries@childrenshealthscotland.org

Children's Health Scotland helps families access the best possible healthcare by providing information, resources, support and advice.

This factsheet was written in partnership with Children's Health Scotland.

With thanks to staff at NHS Forth Valley for their advice and input.





How Enquire can help

Enquire can help you understand your child's rights to additional support for learning and how to work in partnership with their school or nursery to make sure your child gets the support they need.

Enquire can:

- explain your child's rights to additional support for learning
- listen to any questions and concerns
- advise you on the way forward
- help you find local education and support services.

You can contact our helpline on **0345 123 2303** or **info@enquire.org.uk**
Access to interpreters is available.

You can also find lots more information about additional support for learning, including our full range of publications, at **www.enquire.org.uk**

The information on our website is available in over 100 languages and with a range of accessibility tools, such as text-to-speech.

Reach, as part of Enquire, provides advice and information for children, parents, carers and professionals about children's rights to additional support for learning: **www.reach.scot**

Enquire is also a partner in the My Rights, My Say service. My Rights, My Say supports children aged 12-15 with additional support needs to exercise their rights to be involved in decisions about their support in school:
www.myrightsmysay.scot

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