

Caring for Children with Disabilities and Complex Health Needs

STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011:

- [Regulation 15 - Health of children placed with foster parents.](#)

Fostering Services National Minimum Standards:

- [Standard 1 - The child's wishes and feelings and those significant to them.](#)
- [Standard 6 - Promoting Health and Wellbeing.](#)

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care:

- [Standard 2 - Understand your role as a foster carer.](#)
- [Standard 3 - Understand health and safety, and healthy care.](#)
- [Standard 5 - Understand the development of children and young people.](#)

RELATED GUIDANCE

- [Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years: Statutory Guidance for Organisations who work with and Support Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(2014\)](#)
- [Children and young people's continuing care national framework - The process for assessing, deciding and agreeing continuing care for children with complex health needs](#)

Introduction

This chapter explores the care of children with disabilities and complex health needs. While it is impossible to list all the different types of disabilities and health needs, it is important to remember that professionals involved with the child have a clear understanding of their condition and how it affects their daily life. Additionally, labels like "autistic" may not always be accurate as some signs and symptoms of autism could be similar to those of trauma and therefore misleading. Collaboration with others involved in the child's care is necessary to gain a better understanding of their needs and true characteristics.

Children with disabilities may require various forms of assistance, including:

- Support with physical disabilities, such as mobility issues.
- Help with learning difficulties and social disorders, like those on the Autistic Spectrum.

- Aid for sensory impairments, such as partial sight.

Children with complex health issues may need specialized care, including:

- Administration of special medication and management of conditions like epilepsy.
- Assistance with breathing, eating, and other daily functions, such as using the toilet and bathing.

Some children may require help in both categories. It is important to note that certain benefits entitled to the child should not be affected by their placement in a foster home.

To ensure appropriate care, the following will be in place before the child moves in:

- Caregivers may need specialized training from qualified medical professionals, enabling them to administer special medication, provide treatment, and understand the child's specific needs.
- Provision of suitable equipment, such as hoists, special car seats, or wheelchairs.
- Completion of risk assessments for manual handling, particularly when there are potential risks.
- Clarification of the equipment the child may bring and identification of any additional needs they may have.

Once the decision to care for the child is made, the Placement Planning meeting should detail all the necessary support, including medical needs. It should be clear which decisions foster carers can make regarding the child's day-to-day life, including medical decisions.

All children with disabilities should have an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) that outlines the support they require to optimize their education, whether in school, pre-school, or college. Foster Carers should familiarise themselves with the EHCP before the child is placed. Many children with disabilities require ongoing services throughout their lives.

Local Offer

Local authorities in England are obligated to develop and publish a Local Offer that outlines the expected support available for children and young people aged 0-25 with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or disabilities, regardless of whether they have an Education, Health, and Care Plan. The Local Offer should be accessible through the local authority website and include information on:

- Special educational, health, and social care provisions for children and young people with SEN or disabilities, including online and blended learning.
- Identification and assessment arrangements for children and young people's SEN, including Education, Health, and Care Needs Assessments.
- Education provision, post-16 education, and training.
- Provision to assist young people in transitioning to adulthood.
- Travel arrangements to and from educational institutions.
- Childcare, including suitable provision for disabled children and those with SEN.

- Support available to young people in higher education, such as the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) and the application process.
- Dispute resolution, mediation, and complaint procedures.

The Local Offer should include both local provision and provision outside the local area that the local authority expects children and young people with SEN or disabilities under their responsibility to utilize. This may include provision in neighbouring areas or joint support services provided by multiple local authorities.

For detailed information on the local offer, please refer to the following web links:

[Special Educational Needs & Disabilities \(SEND\)](#)

[Special Educational Needs & Disabilities - Reading's Local Offer](#)

Caring for children with disabilities and complex health needs requires understanding their unique needs, providing appropriate support, and collaborating with professionals. By prioritizing the child's well-being and accessing available resources and support systems, foster carers can help these children reach their full potential, be included and lead fulfilling lives.