



## Information on accessing education and financial support.

*"You need a diagnosis to be able to get support in schools – or to be able to get Disability Living Allowance (DLA)"* is a phrase often heard. It can also be given as a reason why parents/carers may request a specialist medical assessment to obtain a diagnosis, or why professionals make referrals to specialist medical services. Although it is commonly assumed to be fact by some professionals and families it is not accurate.

Nottinghamshire County has a new pathway in place to support families and children where there are concerns about a child or young person's behaviour. A 'pathway' is a recommended process or route that services should follow to make sure services are based on scientific evidence, are of a standard quality and are cost effective. Pathways have been used in a range of services since the 1980s, including the NHS and Local Authorities. The "Nottinghamshire County Multi-Agency Concerning Behaviours Pathway" is a new, multi-agency pathway which brings health, social care, education and voluntary sector services together to support children, young people and their families. Its aim is to ensure that the right support is available to / for children and young people, at the right time and in the right place.

Concerning Behaviour or put more simply 'behaviour that is concerning' can arise for many different reasons, which could be social, emotional, developmental or medical – or indeed, a combination of any of these factors – it can even be part of growing up. This pathway has been developed because children and young people with behaviours that concern are often referred to specialist agencies for a 'medical diagnosis' - with limited exploration of their needs, and without support having been put in place. Frequently, a number of agencies can be referred to at the same time and they do not always work together- which parents/carers tell us is frustrating, and creates waste and inefficiency. Evidence suggests that if young peoples' needs are explored and 'working with families' support is put in place, many do not need specialist medical assessment and diagnosis. Indeed, having a diagnosis can affect a young person's career path.

Given that the new pathway moves away from routinely seeking medical diagnosis and instead focuses on putting early support in place - and maintaining this in line with the child and or family need - families and professionals have asked for clarification about;

- what support children can get in school
- whether specialist involvement is needed to apply for financial assistance

We have listened to this request, and, as a consequence, developed this short statement to provide clarity.

### **Educational Support**

If a child or young person has a medical diagnosis, a school needs to take this into account when it plans provision to meet the child's educational needs. Educational law, however, specifies that schools have a responsibility to identify and make provision for a child's educational needs whether or not they have a medical diagnosis. Therefore, if a child is experiencing difficulty in their educational setting, families can expect the following:

The classroom teacher would talk to parents/family and in partnership agree strategies which need to be put into place. The classroom teacher may discuss this with the school Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), or, with your consent, other experts for advice. These ideas are usually recorded on an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and reviewed, typically on a termly basis, or, more frequently if needed. Families can reasonably accept that school would work in partnership with them, and be clear with them about what they are doing to support a child, and what success would look like.

If difficulties continue, then school may ask for additional advice and guidance - usually through the Family of Schools Springboard meeting. This is where a group of professionals from both within schools and from the Local Authority meet to agree how best to support children and young people. These meetings not only help to find ways forward with particular children, but also support the longer term development of schools' practice or / relating to children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

As a result of recent changes to SEND funding introduced at a national level, there is now greater consistency and clarity about what it is reasonable to expect of schools. In the first instance, every state funded mainstream school is expected to put in place up to £6,000 of targeted support per year for a child with special educational needs (with or without a diagnosis). This is on top of whatever is made available to all pupils at the school.

If, despite this level of funding, more needs to be done to help a child or young person in school, then the school can approach its Family of Schools (i.e. a group of local schools that collaborates to support pupils with SEND) to request additional money (again, with or without a diagnosis). This is known as Additional Family Needs (AFN) funding. Currently, in most Families of Schools this additional money can, depending on need, provide up to £8,000 worth of support per child on top of the £6,000 the school would already be contributing.

For a small number of children and young people in the county, even more support is needed. In these cases where pupil's needs are such that they cannot be addressed solely by a combination of the money available to the school and via AFN funding, the school applies directly to the Local Authority's High Level Needs (HLN) panel. This panel moderates requests for funding across the whole of the county. Whilst some of these children may have a statement, and/or a diagnosis, neither of these is needed for the school to apply for HLN funding; the HLN panel makes its decision by matching the child's needs against commonly agreed descriptors.

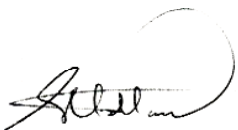
Schools are asked to present their case for extra funding with reference to descriptors set out in a document called "Arrangements for accessing top-up funding for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in Nottinghamshire mainstream schools", rather than the decision being reliant on a diagnosis. The HLN panel is a single panel which covers the whole county and consists of school representatives (SENCOs, Family SENCOs, head teachers) as well as Local Authority staff

and health representatives. Their collective decision draws on the information provided by the school, their own expertise, and case precedents. For children where AFN or HLN funding is being sought, schools are required to produce what is called a 'Provision Map' which describes in detail how the school uses existing funding and how it proposes to use the additional funding it is now requesting.

Increasingly, schools have freedom to use any additional funding in a range of ways and not simply by the provision of additional teaching assistant (TA) support. Best practice would suggest that any individual pupil interventions (such as TA support) are most effective when implemented within the context of a whole school approach. Where schools need advice on elements such as a provision map, or how best to support a child, then they can access this help from LA support services, namely the Schools and Families Specialist Support Service (SFSS), and Educational Psychology service - either directly, or preferably, through the Family of Schools Springboard meeting.

Wherever possible, and where a parent wants it, funding and provision is made available to support children in mainstream educational settings. However, some children's needs are so complex that a specialist placement is required to meet the child's educational needs. In 2014, statements will be replaced by Education, Health Care Plans (EHCs) which are based on an understanding of a child's needs; a diagnosis is not required. The above applies to all state funded mainstream schools including academies.

The Concerning Behaviours Pathway has been developed in collaboration with a broad range of health and social care services and agencies. Educational representation was provided by senior colleagues in SEND Policy & Provision. If schools have any queries about operation of the pathway, including their role in its implementation, these should be directed to the Commissioning Officer SEND Policy & Provision.



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### **Financial Support (Disability Living Allowance)**

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for children may help with the extra costs of looking after a child who:

- is under 16
- has difficulties walking or needs more looking after than a child of the same age who doesn't have a disability

Usually, to qualify for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for children the child must:

- be under 16
- need extra looking after or have walking difficulties

- be in Great Britain, another European Economic Area (EEA) country or Switzerland when you claim - there are some exceptions, e.g. family members of the Armed Forces
- have lived in Great Britain for 2 out of the last 3 years if over 3 years old
- be habitually resident in the UK, Ireland, Isle of Man or the Channel Islands
- not be subject to immigration control

There are some exceptions to these conditions if the child is living or coming from another EEA country or Switzerland.

You can claim DLA for children if you're in or out of work.

The application form for DLA asks for information about the child's needs. This can be supported by information from a doctor, but it is not essential to have a medical diagnosis, or be under specialist consultant care. Anyone over 16 must apply for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) instead of DLA. Personal Independence Payment (PIP) helps with some of the extra costs caused by long-term ill-health or a disability if you're aged 16 to 64.

The rate depends on how your condition affects you, not the condition itself. You must have a long-term health condition or disability and have difficulties with activities related to 'daily living' and or mobility.



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