

Module 7

Support a child with disabilities or special educational needs

Introduction

A number of the issues associated with the support of children with disabilities, or with special needs, have been considered in earlier modules. You may find it beneficial to refer back to these at some stage when completing this module.

What are Special Educational Needs (SEN)?

Every child is an individual and children with special educational needs are as different from each other as any other children, perhaps even more so. Even if a child has had a 'label' attached to his/her particular special need, this does not mean that his/her needs will be exactly the same as others with the same 'condition.'

Children with special educational needs all have learning difficulties that make it much harder for them to learn than most children of the same age. It includes those with a range of underlying conditions such as:

- cognitive, physical or sensory difficulties
- emotional and behavioural difficulties
- difficulties with speech and language or social interaction

Such children may need additional or different help from that given to other children of the same age.

Definition of disability:

'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.'

In all types of disability, the difficulties can range from mild to severe and many children will have problems in more than one area of learning. When you are looking for information to help a particular child you should consider all the areas in which he/she might have difficulty.

This definition is broad and includes a wide range of impairments including:

- learning disabilities
- dyslexia
- diabetes or epilepsy where the effect of the impairment on the pupil's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activity is adverse, substantial and long-term.

Note:

Although the signs, symptoms and needs of all children with SEN and disabilities will be different, for the purposes of this module the term SEN will include those children with disabilities.

Now answer question 7.1

Legislation and Codes of Practice

There has been a considerable amount of new legislation introduced since the introduction of The Children Act in 1989.

The main laws affecting the way in which SEN is supported within schools are:

- 1992 Schools Act,
- 1993 Education Act (Updated the 1981 Act), (*which first introduced the SEN Code of Practice*)
- 1995 Disability Discrimination Act
- 2000 Human Rights Act
- 2001 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act
- 2001 SEN Codes of Practice
- 2004 The Children Act – formed through Every Child Matters

There are also other laws that govern the way you use the information you collect from the statement process related to the assessment of a child with SEN. The main one is the Data Protection Act.

The Education Act

Among others, this requires that the governing bodies of schools use their 'best endeavours' to ensure that appropriate provision is made for children with special educational needs. Both Local Authorities and schools, and others working with them, are required to 'have regard to' the SEN Code of Practice, which provides the main guidance on how they might interpret their duties. SEN responsibilities are coordinated within the school by the SEN Coordinator (SENCO).

SEN Code of Practice 2002

The new SEN Code of Practice came into force in January 2002. It includes the rights and duties introduced by the SEN and Disability Act 2001. LEAs, schools, early education settings, health and social services must all have regard to the Code of Practice.

It sets out a model of intervention for children with special educational needs within both early education settings (at early years action and early years action plus) and in school settings (at school action and school action plus). It recommends a graduated approach to identification, assessment and provision. A toolkit is provided with the code to aid its implementation.

There are a number of changes in the new code including a stronger emphasis on:

- working with parents
- pupil participation
- working in partnership with other agencies

It also now includes:

- a stronger right for children with special educational needs (SEN) to be educated in a mainstream school.
- a requirement that LEAs provide services offering advice and information and a means of resolving disputes – ‘disagreement resolution’ – to parents of children with SEN.
- A new duty on schools and relevant early years education providers to tell parents when they are making special educational provision for their child.
- A new right for schools, health staff, social services and relevant nursery education providers to request a statutory assessment of a child.

Now answer question 6.2

Support children with disabilities or SEN by providing care and encouragement

In module1 (*Provide support for learning activities*) we looked at different aspects of SEN including children with hearing and visual impairments, learning difficulties and behavioural disorders. You may now wish to revisit this module in order to refresh your knowledge and understanding of the main ways in which a child should be supported within an educational environment.

Types of special educational needs

Learning difficulties are usually described as moderate, severe, profound and multiple or specific.

Moderate learning difficulties

This includes children who have difficulties in all areas of learning. Their rate of progress is very slow. They attend mainstream schools unless they also have additional significant difficulties in which case they may be placed in a special school.

Severe learning difficulties

This describes children who show a global delay in all areas of physical, intellectual and social development.

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Exercises and Activities

Question 7.1

Why is it important that you don't label children and young people? You may want to look at module 2 & module 4 for information that will help you with this answer.

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Question 7.2

List the main legislation that governs the way SEN are supported in schools.

What responsibilities does the SEN Code of Practice place on the Governing Body or Management Group of the institution in which you work/ wish to work?

Note: you will need to refer to SEN Codes of Practice to answer this question. If required you can refer to/download a copy at:
<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=3724>

In what way are you, as a teaching assistant affected by these?