**Inclusion Programme Bulletin: January 2016**

**Part 6: Writing Outcomes – Code of Practice, Chapter 9**

**Introduction**

1. When drawing up EHC Plans – and, in Sheffield, My Plans – it is important that it is really clear what it is that we want to help children and young people achieve. This is why section E of all EHC Plans **must** specify the outcomes sought for the child or young person. These must address the individual’s needs and be delivered through the specified provision.

**Outcomes and Aspirations**

1. Outcomes must always be focused on enabling children and young people to move towards the long-term aspirations of employment or higher education, independent living and community participation.
2. These aspirations, specified in section A of the EHC Plan, are not outcomes in themselves and Sheffield City Council cannot be held accountable for achieving a child or young person’s aspirations. For example, Sheffield City Council cannot be required to maintain an EHC Plan until a young person secures employment.

**SMART Outcomes**

1. An outcome can be defined as the benefit or difference made to an individual as a result of an intervention. Outcomes are not a description of the service being provided. All outcomes must be SMART:  
   * **S**pecific: be really clear what it is that the intervention will achieve;
   * **M**easurable: be really clear how everyone will know it has been achieved;
   * **A**chievable: stretching but achievable by the individual;
   * **R**ealistic: challenging but give the individual a genuine chance of success; and
   * **T**imebound: clear about the timeframe within which the outcome will be achieved
2. It is really important that outcomes are genuinely SMART. This is because having regard to whether the outcomes have been met is a statutory requirement in deciding whether to cease an EHC Plan. Everyone needs to be clear that they understood and agreed what the outcomes meant, and that they are all agreed that they have been met. Outcomes that are not SMART – e.g. develop independent living skills – will be difficult to evidence as complete.

**Writing Outcomes**

1. When writing outcomes, it should be really clear why it is *important to* the individual – why they (or their parents for younger children) – want to achieve it; and why it is *important for* the individual as judged in their best interests by professionals working with them. For example, in the case of speech and language therapy, this might be important to the individual because they want to be able to talk to their friends; it is important for them because being able to communicate reduces their frustration and related poor behaviour.
2. Outcomes should be written as positive achievements, not negative preventions – moving towards something good, not away from something bad. Writing them as already achieved makes outcomes more compelling and helps formulate SMART outcomes. Use the following sentence structure as a guide:  
     
   *“****By*** *[insert date, or end of educational stage/phase] [insert name]* ***will be able to*** *[insert what they will be able to do]* ***so that*** *[insert important to/for]”.*
3. Here are some examples of how this might look in practice:  
     
   *“By the end of key stage 2, Jenny will be able to communicate in sentences so that she can be understood by her friends and can play happily with them at break time every day without getting frustrated at not being understood”*  
   *“By June 2018, Jack will be able to use the bus to get to school every day by himself and to go shopping on his own once a month on Saturdays”.*
4. Disciplined use of the phrase “will be able to” is really important; it is often when deviating from this wording that people start to find it more difficult to write outcomes – e.g. using “will have” or “will achieve” is often not helpful.
5. Describing what someone will be able to do is describing an action, skill or function that they can’t do now, but will be able to do if they achieve the outcome. It’s also not describing something they might have access to – e.g. will be able to join a football club; or something aspirational – e.g. they will be able to develop coping strategies.

**Timeframes for Outcomes**

1. Normally, outcomes would be set for the end of a key stage or phase of education – e.g. by the end of key stage 2, or by the end of primary school. It is recommended that outcomes are usually set for a period of twelve months or more so that reviewing whether they have been met can always be linked to the Annual Review of the EHC Plan.
2. Outcomes might be shorter than twelve months for young people approaching the end of their time in education and training; for those in Early Years where it is recommended that EHC Plans are reviewed every six months; or, in Sheffield, for those with My Plans that are reviewed three times a year.
3. In most cases, a good EHC Plan will have a range of outcomes, some to be achieved by the end of the current phase or stage of education, and one or two looking ahead to the next phase or stage of education. This is less likely to be the case as young people approach the end of their time in education. However, from Year 9 onwards all EHC Plans should contain outcomes that are focused on preparing for adulthood.

**Steps to achieve**

1. Each outcome should include a number of smaller measures that enable families and professionals to see whether anticipated progress is being made towards the outcome. Reviewing the steps to achieve should be part of regular progress checks and will form a key part of the discussion at the Annual Review.

**Further advice**

1. Writing outcomes is not always easy. The Council for Disabled Children have produced [The Outcomes Pyramid](https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/ehc-outcomes-pyramid) that some may find helpful. Sheffield City Council can also provide training on writing outcomes – please contact us if you would like to take advantage of this opportunity.