



This briefing provides advice for practitioners and can also be used to inform partners, learners and their parents and carers of developments in Curriculum for Excellence (CfE).

CfE Briefing ¹³

Planning for Learning part 3: Individualised educational programmes (IEPs)¹

Scottish education is going through a period of transformation that will affect all learners. Approaches to the curriculum, learning, teaching, assessment, awards and qualifications are all changing. Education Scotland is supporting change by sharing emerging practice to inform discussion and promote innovation. IEPs have been an important and formal part of planning to meet learners' additional support needs in Scottish education since the publication of [Effective Provision for Special Educational Needs](#) (1994). They are referred to in Supporting Children's Learning, the 'Code of Practice' for the Additional Support for Learning Act (2004). This CfE briefing about IEPs is the third in a series (see also No's 11 and 12) about effective planning for learning.

Staff address learners' needs through a variety of approaches including: early intervention strategies; a curriculum and approaches to learning and teaching which are very well matched to the needs of all learners; deployment of support staff; and engaging the expertise and resources of all possible partner agencies and organisations, including the voluntary sector. Effective multi-agency approaches are in place, which provide a high level and quality of support to all learners and their families through well planned highly effective and prompt intervention. [Journey to Excellence Improvement guide: Supporting children and young people](#)

¹ These are sometimes called Individual Support Plans (ISPs), Educational Support Plans (ESPs), Additional Support Plans (ASPs).

An IEP is a non-statutory document used to plan specific aspects of education for learners who need some or all of their curriculum to be individualised

1. What is an IEP for?

An IEP is a non-statutory document used to plan specific aspects of education for learners who need some or all of their curriculum to be individualised. This means that their needs will have been assessed, usually as part of a [staged intervention](#) process. It also means that it has been agreed that these needs cannot be met by their teacher or early years practitioner through standard adaptations to learning experiences or personalisation. Standard adaptations, which will have been considered before an IEP is created, might include: the use of different levels of written material; organisation of opportunities for children and young people to respond or complete tasks in different ways; providing individual or small group support from adults or other children and young people; and technological support such as spell-checker, laptop, dictaphone or Braille machine.

The IEP is a framework for all of those directly involved to work together to agree, pursue and then review appropriate targets in relation to the areas of the curriculum which need to be individualised for the child or young person. Under the [2009 revision of the Additional Support for Learning Act](#) (2004), all children and young people who are 'looked after' should be assessed to identify whether or not they have additional support needs. If they do, the local authority staged intervention process should then be used to find out if they need an IEP, and a broader assessment undertaken to see if they also meet the criteria

to have a **coordinated support plan** (CSP). The IEP may form part of the 'Child's Plan' for children and young people who require a multi-agency approach to meeting their needs.

2. How does this fit in with curriculum planning more broadly?

On its own, an IEP is not a complete curriculum planner for the learner who has one. Rather, it is for planning those aspects of the curriculum which need to be individualised for them, with other aspects planned in the same way as they are for all other learners. Although staged intervention processes are well embedded across Scotland, the starting point is usually where an additional need has been identified. In CfE, all children and young people are entitled to support to meet their learning needs and this will be addressed in planning, as appropriate. Many special schools and units in mainstream schools previously found the 5-14 'elaborated curriculum' to be helpful when they organised and planned learning for children and young people with more complex needs. However, this approach was developed long before CfE, and CfE now provides a better framework for meeting these needs.



3. What should an IEP contain?

Most IEPs will contain the following.

- **Basic information** about the child or young person (name, date of birth, class)
- Brief outline of her/his **strengths and needs**, with reference to the staged intervention process
- A list of **relevant staff** involved in supporting learning, with contact details
- **Long-term targets**, to be reviewed at least once a year
- **Short-term targets**, to be reviewed at least termly. These are usually steps towards meeting each of the long-term targets. They should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timed) and detail, as appropriate, methodology and resources to be used and the member of staff who will co-ordinate
- IEP **implementation date** and IEP **review date**

4. Who should be involved in preparing IEPs?

The IEP is a framework for all of those directly involved to work together to agree, pursue and then review appropriate targets. In a mainstream school, drafting, writing, implementing and reviewing an IEP is likely to involve the learner and their parent/carer, the class teacher/s or early years practitioner, and the support for learning teacher and/or guidance/pastoral teacher and/or senior manager. If staff from other agencies are involved, it may also be appropriate for them to be

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involved in planning the IEP. The co-ordinator of the IEP is almost always a member of staff from the educational establishment itself. Learners who have more complex additional support needs cannot always participate fully in decisions about their education. A range of helpful advice for this circumstance is available, including [Communication Matters](#) (2012), published by the University of Edinburgh.

5. What processes are needed for an IEP to be effective?

Almost all local authorities have a set of procedures in place, linked to their staged intervention process, for children and young people with IEPs. These usually include the following.

- **Initial assessment** of the child or young person
- Agreement of professionals that an **IEP is appropriate** and that needs cannot be met through differentiation alone
- **Initial meeting** with professionals, parents/carers and the child or young person to agree the areas which need to be individualised
- Appointment of named **IEP coordinator**
- **Final version** of IEP produced and circulated to all concerned by IEP coordinator
- IEP used as working document to **inform learning and teaching**
- **Termly** (or more frequent) review of short-term targets



- **Annual** (or more frequent) review of long-term targets and production of new IEP

6. Does an IEP need to be an electronic document?

Almost all local authorities now have their own electronic IEP format. These range from word-processing documents through to templates which are an integrated part of the local authority management information system (MIS). Practitioners usually find these approaches helpful. However, IEPs can remain handwritten if necessary. Whatever medium is used, the key is for the IEP to be appropriate for the child or young person, used as a working document to inform learning on a day-to-day basis, and kept up to date. Even when the IEP is part of a larger planning

document, such as the Child's Plan referred to in [GIRFEC](#) and the current [Children and Young People Bill](#) (2013), the basic principles outlined above need to be followed.

7. What is the difference between an IEP and a CSP?

A small number of children and young people have additional support needs arising from complex or multiple factors which require a high degree of coordination of support from education authorities and other agencies. A **coordinated support plan** (CSP) is a statutory document which is put in place for those children and young people who meet the criteria for one due to having complex needs. The CSP contains educational

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objectives similar in format to those which can be found in an IEP, but only where the involvement of more than one agency is required. Further details regarding CSPs can be found in the revised 'code of practice', [Supporting Children's Learning](#) (2010).

8. Improving the impact of IEPs

When reviewing the impact of IEPs in your establishment, in addition to the prompts embedded throughout this paper, you may find it helpful to consider the following questions.

- Has a staged intervention or equivalent process been used effectively to identify the need for an IEP?

- Does the IEP specify strengths and development needs clearly in a way that everyone involved can understand?
- Are short-term targets reviewed, evaluated and updated *at least* once per term and long-term targets reviewed, evaluated and updated *at least* annually?
- Do all teachers and early years practitioners know which learners have IEPs and take this into consideration when they plan their lessons?
- Is the progress of children/ young people with IEPs tracked and monitored and the impact evaluated?
- Is progression in learning planned over time from one IEP to the next, and is it clear and unambiguous?

- How effectively do IEPs contribute to planning across key transitions, including from pre-school to primary, from primary to secondary, and from secondary to post-school destinations?
- How robust are procedures for standing down IEPs when they are no longer needed?

9. Where can I find out more?

Several publications and websites have been available since before the implementation of the Additional Support for Learning Act and CfE. These continue to provide a range of helpful background, including [Effective Provision for Special Educational Needs](#) (1994), [Success for All](#) (1999-2003), [Targets for pupils with special educational needs](#) (1998) and [The Manual of Good Practice in Special Educational Needs](#) (1999).

Education Scotland is collecting a number of examples of IEPs from across the country and these will be found on the 'Supporting Learners' Glow page. They are provided as a stimulus for discussion in schools and other educational establishments. In all cases, it is the way these documents are used, rather than the format of the document itself, that is key to the effective delivery and impact for learners.