

The Blind Spot in Education Health and Care Plans: Is vision being overlooked?

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Introduction

Children recognised as having special needs are issued with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)/Statement of Educational Need (SEN). The EHCP/SEN identifies the child's educational, medical and social needs and details support required to meet those needs. This study aims to evaluate the record of visual need and associated support in the EHCP/SEN against the presenting level of vision measured at an in-school vision assessment.

Methods

Two schools participated in the study. All pupils of participating schools were invited for full in-school vision assessment. Parental permission was sought for the authors to view each participant's EHCP/SEN. Presenting vision was defined as the habitual level of vision using tests appropriate for each child's age and ability.

Results

EHCP/SENs were reviewed and full vision assessments were conducted on 201 participants (3-19 years). Learning difficulty within the group ranged from moderate to profound. Thirteen participants (6.5%) presented with a visual impairment ($>0.5\log\text{MAR}/>6/18$); seven (54%) of which had no indication of visual impairment recorded in their EHCP/SEN. A single EHCP/SEN identified the need for classroom modifications to address visual limitations.

Discussion

Relevant vision information was often missing from EHCP/SENs. Where present, vision information was primarily presented as clinical jargon, unrelated to the child's educational needs/setting.

Conclusion/Significance

This study highlights the need for EHCP/SENs to more robustly identify children with poor vision. Better methods are also needed to ensure meaningful communication of visual status in EHCP/SENs so that visual limitations are accommodated in educational settings and adjustments made to reduce negative impacts on learning.

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