

# Assessment and Planning

- the role of the Assessment and Planning Coordinator



**Early Support**

for children, young people and families

**South East**  
Special Educational Needs & Disability

[www.se7pathfinder.co.uk](http://www.se7pathfinder.co.uk)

## Background

This booklet is an outcome from two family resilience and key working workshops attended by representatives from SE7. We got together for six main reasons:

- we knew that families value having key working support and we wanted to clarify what this may look like within the co-ordinated assessment and planning process.
- we recognised that the new coordinated assessment and planning process had to be scalable and sustainable
- we are strongly supportive of key working and we needed to clarify in which circumstances it might best be used.
- we needed to discuss family resilience and key working in the wider context as well as specifically relating to the co-ordinated assessment and planning process.
- we needed to clarify the skills, knowledge, qualities and tools required by the key person working with the child, young person and their family through the coordinated assessment and planning process and developing the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP); and
- we wanted to embed key working approaches into the Assessment and Planning role where possible, and appropriate because it facilitates the co-ordination of an integrated package of solution focused support; builds on partnership working and helps build strong and resilient families.

The booklet identifies the tasks, skills, knowledge, qualities and tools likely to be required within each stage of the SEND assessment and planning process and discusses the differences and similarities between this role and key working to support families of disabled children.

For the purpose of this booklet, we have called the key person (s) supporting the child, young person and their family through the co-ordinated assessment and planning process for the co-production of the EHCP, 'Assessment and Planning Co-ordinators'. Each area may adopt other titles.

The SE7 approach to the SEND pathfinder builds on the principles underpinning Early Support and key working. However it has become clear that because of the statutory nature of the SEND process there are some important differences between the time limited role of the central person working with families through the assessment and planning process and the longer lasting single point of contact and continuity of key working.

The following sections describe tasks, skills, knowledge, qualities and tools required for each stage of the SE7 Assessment and Planning Framework and how key working relates to the Assessment and Planning Coordinator's role.

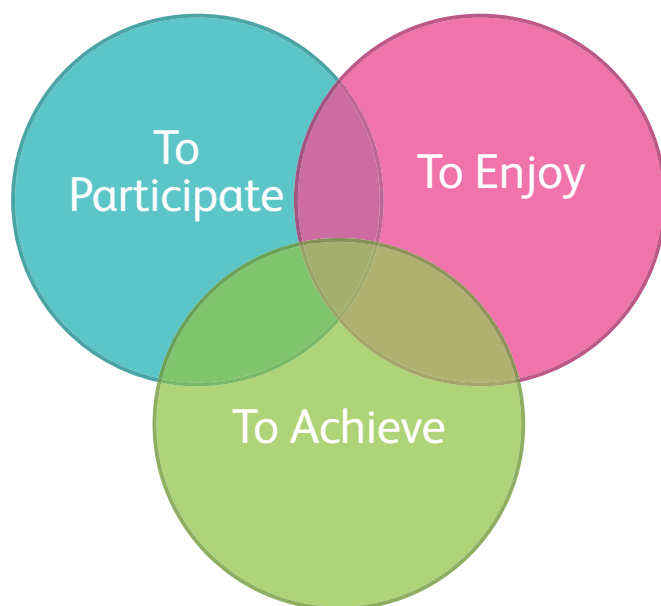
Section 1	Family Resilience
Section 2	The coordinated assessment and planning process
Section 3	The tasks for the Assessment and Planning Coordinator
Section 4	Assessment and Planning Coordinator requirements
Section 5	The range of tools that the Assessment and Planning Coordinator will need
Section 6	Key working
Section 7	Key working support to facilitate the Assessment and Planning process
Section 8	Key working continuum of support

## Section 1: Family Resilience

‘Parents with disabled children are likely to face higher levels of stress and they value the practical and emotional support of key working’.

*Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability (DfE 2011)*

All families find their own way to adapt and evolve as children grow and develop within the ordinary highs and lows of family life. Families seek to optimise the child’s strengths and abilities, enabling them to participate, enjoy and achieve and this is the same families where the children and young people have additional needs.



While some families are able to navigate the systems successfully unaided, many benefit from support. For some, the strains and challenges are considerable, come from many directions and they may corrode the family’s ability to manage in the longer term. Findings from three decades of research about the consequences of caring for children with additional needs include high incidence of chronic stress, isolation, poor maternal and paternal health and family breakdown.

There is less evidence about what factors actively contribute to positive resilience in families and what boosts or enhances resilience. We do know that the ‘maternal sense of mastery’, knowledge of what support is available, ability to make informed decisions, and having choice and control over at least some aspects of daily life seem to be important. Other supportive factors include contact with peers, emotional processing opportunities and being part of solution focussed support to other families.

Supporting families to be resilient is everyone’s responsibility including the Assessment and Planning Coordinator. The parent carers and child or young person should feel more informed, able to make decisions and know where to access relevant support following contact with coordinators. They should feel more confident about their own abilities. The co-ordinator role provides opportunities to build resilience for families, and avoids dependency on agents outside the family.

Families report unique experiences but there are common themes to their journey.

Resilience is the ability to recover and to withstand shock, suffering and disappointment.

Resilience is at the heart of the SE7 pathfinder model and is:

- all about relationships within families, and with people working with them and their children
- knowing what support is available and how to access it
- being able to make informed decisions
- positive qualities (like a sense of humour, determination)

The aim of the new assessment process is firstly to make the system work better by having the child and family at its heart: listening to and understanding the child and family better and reducing the toll of conflict on parent carers and families. Secondly where additional support is needed, to enable and equip parent carers to make daily life better for their children. Supporting, informing and equipping parents maximises the opportunities for improved child and family outcomes.

The factors that influence resilience include:

- Risk versus resistance
- Intrinsic versus extrinsic
- Individual, family or community social capital

A key finding is the importance of ‘mother’s sense of mastery’ – ability to shape solutions and access help.

**What we know is:**

- Different strokes for different folks – there is no one-size fits all and some families need more support than others
- Families need different things at different times (known critical times and times of transition from one stage to another are often critical as are times of unexpected changes)
- Resilience is influenced by people, access, assets and skills and knowledge – the ‘real wealth’ of the family

## Section 2: the coordinated assessment and planning process

### a. The Principles of Emerging Good Practice

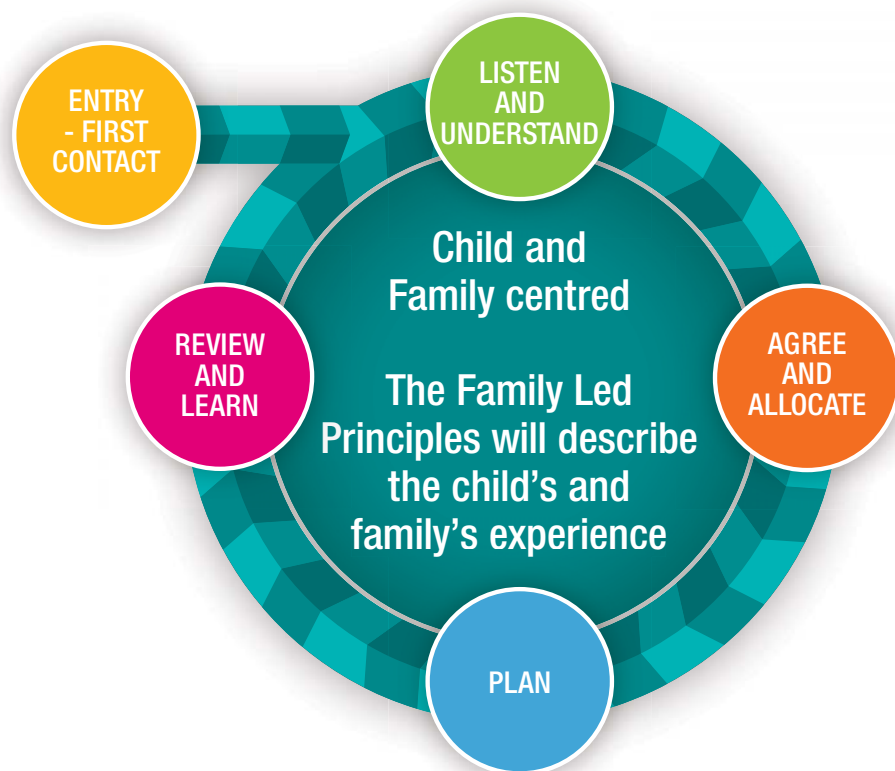
The DfE Principles of Emerging Good Practice set out that the coordinated assessment process and Education, Health and Care Plans should take account of:

- **Children, young people and families are at the centre** of the assessment and planning process and should be partners in making decisions throughout, making it a co-produced process.
- Assessment and planning should be an **on-going process** which builds on previous assessments and continues to identify and meet the needs of children, young people and families as they develop.
- As far as possible, there should be a **‘tell us once’ approach** to sharing information, so children, young people and families don’t have to repeat the same information to different agencies, or different practitioners/ services within each agency.
- Children, young people and families should be **supported through the assessment process by a single point of contact**, particularly in more complex cases and during difficult transitional periods.
- For children, young people and their family the assessment process should be coordinated, person centred, timely and without duplication.
- **Effective co-ordination should take place between education, health and care services**, working together both to reach agreement on key outcomes with children, young people and their family and to secure the appropriate provision to deliver those outcomes.
- **Practitioners should be engaged and committed** to the coordinated assessment and planning process and where necessary, trained in **person centred approaches**.
- **EHCPs should be person centred, evidence-based and focused on outcomes** (both short term outcomes and longer term aspirations for children and young people). Outcomes need to be specific, measurable, achievable and time-bound.
- **EHCPs should be specific about the interventions identified to make a difference**, including the provision needed to help secure those outcomes.
- **Decision-making in relation to the content of EHCPs should be transparent** and involve children, young people and their parent carers themselves.
- **EHCPs should explore how informal (family and community) support** as well as formal support from statutory agencies can be used to achieve agreed outcomes.
- As a minimum, **annual person-centred reviews** should be carried out and should involve the parent/child/young person, and education, health and care services, as needed.
- EHC Plans should indicate **how the child/young person’s learning and development is going to be monitored** and promoted

In order to achieve these important expectations the child, young person and their family will need to be supported through the process by one or more skilled and knowledgeable member(s) of staff. This booklet discusses the skills, knowledge, qualities and tools that these people will need.

## b. The SE7 Assessment and Planning Process

The SE7 assessment and planning framework has 4 main stages. The assessment and planning process must be child, young person and family centred, coordinated, holistic, outcome focused and personalised. This is significantly different in philosophy and approach to the current SEN statement system.



A common basic framework for assessment and planning

Each stage of the process requires a skilled member of staff to work with and support the child, young person and the family leading to the EHCP. In this booklet these are called 'Assessment and Planning Coordinators'.

Children, young people and families will also need support when considering requesting a personal budget, in planning for its use in line with the EHCP and in finding and managing the support through the personal budget. A different member of staff to the Assessment and Planning Coordinator may undertake this task but the two roles will need to be closely integrated.

Assessment and Planning Coordinators will use key working approaches throughout the process.

Within the coordinated assessment and planning process the aim of key working is to ensure the provision of holistic and integrated care and support to meet the individual needs of the child or young person and their family and support the coproduction of a quality EHCP.

This booklet focuses only on the central role of the Assessment and Planning Coordinator. One or more people, depending on the structures within the local area, may undertake this role. There may also be other practitioners involved and there will also be a range of decision-making processes that will be needed but these are not covered here.

## Section 3: The tasks for the Assessment and Planning Coordinator

### Listen and Understand

This is the part of the process where initial contact is made with the family, existing information and knowledge is collated and the holistic strengths and needs of the child, young person and their family are considered. Gaps in understanding are identified and the wider resources available to the family are explored (family, community, voluntary and community sector, statutory and other). Any additional expert or specialist assessment that is required is requested and commissioned.

#### Assessment and Planning Coordinator Tasks

- Contact the family and agree a mutually convenient time and place for the initial meeting.
- Obtain and read any existing reports and assessments of the child's identified special educational needs across education, health and care.
- Recognise that reading previous reports is just part of the listen and understand stage.
- Brief the family about the role of the Assessment and Planning Coordinator and the process and agree with them the issues to be discussed allowing them the opportunity to share their views and concerns through active listening.
- Start to develop an open and professional relationship with the family
- Explain what is meant by 'outcomes' and describe what the process being 'outcome focused' means.
- Adopt a 'tell us once' approach and work with the child or young person and the family to develop the initial sections of the plan e.g. All about me/

Our Story, Circles of Support and What's working and what's not working<sup>1</sup> ensuring that both the voice of the child or young person and their parents are clear and understood and that strengths are identified. *(If the child and their family or young person has an Our Family or My Life (or similar) these will be very helpful and should be taken into consideration.)*

- Enable the child, young person and their family to consider their desired outcomes and record these as expressed by the child, young person and their family.
- Ensure that the family are aware of the next steps and give them the contact details they will need during this period of time.
- Contact and liaise with all professionals involved with the child or young person and their family.
- Ensure that the listening and understanding takes into account all the strengths and needs of the child, young person and their family and that the assessment process including the gathering of information is holistic.
- Identify any gaps in knowledge and agree with the family if there is any additional specialist assessment information required and commission this.

### Agree and allocate

This is the part of the process where actions are agreed including whether or not an EHCP is required. Identify and agree desired long term and shorter term outcomes and their priority. At this stage there are a variety of decisions making arrangements but the planning and allocation of indicative additional and individual resources happens at this stage.

<sup>1</sup>The headings in the EHCP formats used within SE7 vary but all include sections which provide background information about the child or young person in the context of their family.

### Assessment and Planning Coordinator Tasks

- Agree and prioritise longer and shorter term outcomes with the family.
- Signpost the family to services in the Local Offer – universal and targeted.
- Inform family of any indicative additional and individual resource that is likely to be available.
- Inform family about whether it has been agreed to issue a statutory EHCP or an ‘individual support plan’<sup>2</sup>. *(A child or young person could have an Our Family or My Life plan without an additional statutory education or health provision requirement. These should enable the child, young person and their family to experience the same holistic, person centred, family focused coordinated assessment, planning and support as they would have received from the co-production of the EHCP.)*
- Arrange the planning meeting at a mutually convenient time and place.
- Keep the family updated on progress.

### Planning

At this stage the child, young person and family, with the Assessment and Planning Coordinator, develop the child and family centred, holistic, outcome focused and personalised EHCP in partnership with, and including input from, practitioners already involved and other experts. The planning will build on all resources including informal support, mainstream and targeted services and any indicative additional and individual resource.

### Assessment and Planning Coordinator Tasks

- Identify the evidence-based effective interventions and provision required to meet the agreed prioritised outcomes.
- Draft the plan (EHCP or individual support plan).

- Consider with the child or young person and their parents their preference(s) for the educational placement for the child or young person.
- Ensure the family are aware of the implications of the educational preference on any personal budget for additional and individual support.
- Arrange for the plan to be quality assured and signed off.

### Review and Learn

The family and the Assessment and Planning Coordinator undertake a child/family centred review of the agreed outcomes in the plan, to include audit of any direct payments and personal budget. Identifying what has worked and why, and what has not worked and why not, will support the identification of the next steps and amending the plan if necessary. The next review date/timescale should be agreed.

### Assessment and Planning Coordinator Tasks

- Arrange a mutually convenient time and place for the review meeting.
- With the child or young person and their family use person centred review techniques to review whether the agreed outcomes have been achieved.
- Review the outcomes and agree with the family revised outcomes if appropriate.
- Consider the effectiveness of the interventions and provision detailed in the plan.
- Update with the family the initial sections of the plan e.g. ‘All about me’.
- Revise the plan with the family in light of the learning from the review.
- Agree with the family the timescale for the next review.

<sup>2</sup>[www.ncb.org.uk/media/1039041/our\\_family\\_my\\_life\\_resource.doc](http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/1039041/our_family_my_life_resource.doc)

## Section 4: Assessment and Planning Coordinator requirements

In order to undertake these tasks the Assessment and Planning Coordinator will require a high level of knowledge and skills and also have important personal qualities. There will need to be a flexible and effective workforce development strategy to support these important members of staff to undertake this role effectively. A high level of interpersonal skill and experience is needed for the important contact with families. A fundamental requirement is for the contact with the family to have been an equipping and enabling experience, with clarity about the time-limited nature of the contact and next step in the overall process. Assessment and Planning Coordinators will need to be supported by regular high quality supervision as they undertake this important role.

### Knowledge

- › The SEN Code of Practice, legislation and regulations
- › The local processes for coordinated assessment and planning
- › Criteria for services - eligibility
- › The local educational provision and what it provides
- › The Local Offer across education, health and care as well as preparation for adulthood
- › Knowing where to go for information and assistance
- › The roles of services and the professionals within them
- › Child development and learning
- › Evidence based effective interventions and provision or who/where to seek advice
- › The local operation of personal budgets
- › Safeguarding procedures
- › Disability awareness and different special educational needs and disabilities
- › Cultural and religious expectations and differences
- › Person centred thinking, approaches and planning
- › An understanding of outcome focused processes and outcome focused goals

### Skills – ability to:

- › Relate to the family in a professional and enabling manner
- › Support family resilience
- › Keep within boundaries of role and task
- › Actively listen
- › Clearly communicate – orally and in writing
- › Promote co-production
- › Demonstrate positive body language and eye contact
- › Ascertain the important information through discussion and asking the right questions
- › Gain the views of the child or young person
- › Be diplomatic
- › Appreciate different views and ensure own personal constructs do not influence the ability to actively listen, explore and understand

- > Elicit outcome focused goals and priorities
- > Supportively challenge
- > Negotiate
- > Mediate
- > Prepare
- > Follow through with tasks
- > Work in partnership without the hierarchy of expertise
- > Encourage other practitioners to make this a priority
- > Administrate and use IT
- > Keep focused on the outcomes
- > Demonstrate accuracy and have an eye for detail
- > Chair meetings effectively
- > Demonstrate good time management

## Qualities

- > Empathy
- > Person centred
- > Non-judgemental and no preconceived ideas
- > Respect
- > Reliability
- > Pro-active
- > Interested
- > Can do approach
- > Energetic
- > Realistic
- > Creative
- > Responsible
- > Aspirational
- > Confident
- > Tenacity
- > Honesty
- > Professional

## Section 5: The range of tools the Assessment and Planning Coordinator will need:

- >> Effective on-going professional development
- >> High quality management and supervision
- >> Supervision and circle of peer support
- >> Good underpinning assessment and planning processes
- >> Person centred planning tools – including those that help identify what is important to and what is important for the child/young person/family
- >> The local offer
- >> Plan and review templates
- >> Effective IT and case management systems
- >> Administrative support
- >> Interpreting and translation service
- >> Support to communicate in different ways – e.g. signing, Alternative Augmented Communication
- >> Mobile or agile working tools
- >> Lone working support and processes
- >> Time to reflect
- >> Satellite Navigation System or good map

## Section 6: Key working

### Key working is an approach that is:

- A way of enabling effective support, underpinned by the Early Support principles, that helps build strong and resilient children, young people and families
- Defined by a set of functions
- Based on person-centred thinking and partnership approaches to working
- Family focused as well as child or young person focused
- Underpinned by an approach that enables open, equality promoting and supportive, but not dependency orientated, relationships
- A way to facilitate the coordination of an integrated package of support for children, young people and families

### The key working functions are:

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing emotional and practical support as a part of a trusting relationship</li> <li>• Enabling and empowering for decision making and the use of personal budgets</li> <li>• Coordinating practitioners and services around the child, young person and family</li> <li>• Being a single point of regular and consistent contact</li> <li>• Facilitating multiagency meetings</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting and facilitating a single planning and joint assessment process</li> <li>• Identifying strengths and needs of family members</li> <li>• Providing information and signposting</li> <li>• Advocating on a child's, young person's and/or family's behalf</li> <li>• Facilitating clinical and social care seamlessly, integrated with specialist and universal services in an equality promoting approach</li> </ul> |
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Throughout a child's or young person's life, the person (s) providing key working support:

- may come from health, social care, education or the voluntary, community or private and independent sector (or it may be provided by the parent carers or young people themselves)
- should be selected according to the specific needs of the child or young person and their families
- is likely to be someone from the team working with the family, who is identified in discussion with the family, who has the skills, training, time and support to ensure that key working is effective and that the family are the pivotal part of all discussions and decision making
- may undertake all of the functions required by a family themselves; OR they may facilitate some of the required functions to be fulfilled by other members of the team working in partnership with the family.

### ***Does every family need every function all of the time?***

**No!** The level, intensity, frequency and number of the key working functions that children, young people and their family may require is determined by a number of things, including the complexity of the package of support and the family's resilience and support networks. This is likely to vary over time. Investing in effective, clear and accessible sources of impartial information and advice services for all families enables them to make informed decisions and access relevant services. Skills training for parent carers can also assist them safeguard their own physical and mental health (like using safe lifting and handling methods or coping with stress) and access better support (like negotiation skills training or, advice about accessing benefits and money matters). When additional support is needed, key worker support can help.

- **For families requiring a moderate level of support:** the person providing key working support may only deliver a few of the functions (for example, single point of contact; coordinating; empowering decision making). Key working is likely to be light touch, short term and just part of the way that a practitioner works.
- **For families requiring a high level of support, who require services from a number of agencies:** the person providing key working support is likely to ensure that more of the functions are undertaken at a higher level of intensity. In the early stages ensuring frequent and regular proactive contact may be essential, but the intensity should quickly reduce. The key working practitioner could be any member of the team around the family and should be the one who is 'best placed' in terms of the needs of the family and the individual's skills, capacity and relationships. After discussion with the family, the key working practitioner may undertake all of the required functions or facilitate another person from the team around the family to fulfill some of the functions (for example, someone else undertakes advocacy).

- **For families requiring an intensive level of support, who require services from a number of agencies, including extensive specialist input, and complex packages of support:** these families will probably have a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan and access to a personal budget. The person providing key working is likely to need to ensure that most (possibly all) of the functions are undertaken, at a high level of intensity and possibly over an extended period of time. It is likely that the key working practitioner will come from a specialist service and could dedicate a significant amount of their time, at least in the early days or at times of crisis. After discussion with the family, the person providing key working may undertake all of the required functions themselves or facilitate another person from the team around the family to fulfill some of the functions (for example, someone else facilitates clinical care).

## Section 7: Key working support to facilitate the assessment and planning process

The Assessment and Planning Coordinator may well be undertaking key working support for the family for the period of the coordinated assessment and planning process. Some families may already have a person (s) who is key working with them prior to entering the assessment and planning process and some, but not all, may continue to require key working support when the plan is in place. Some key working support may well continue to be carried out by the person who is already key working with them whilst others will become the responsibility of the Assessment and Planning Coordinator until the coordinated assessment and planning process potentially leading to an EHCP (or an Our Family or My Life format of a single plan if not already in place) is completed.

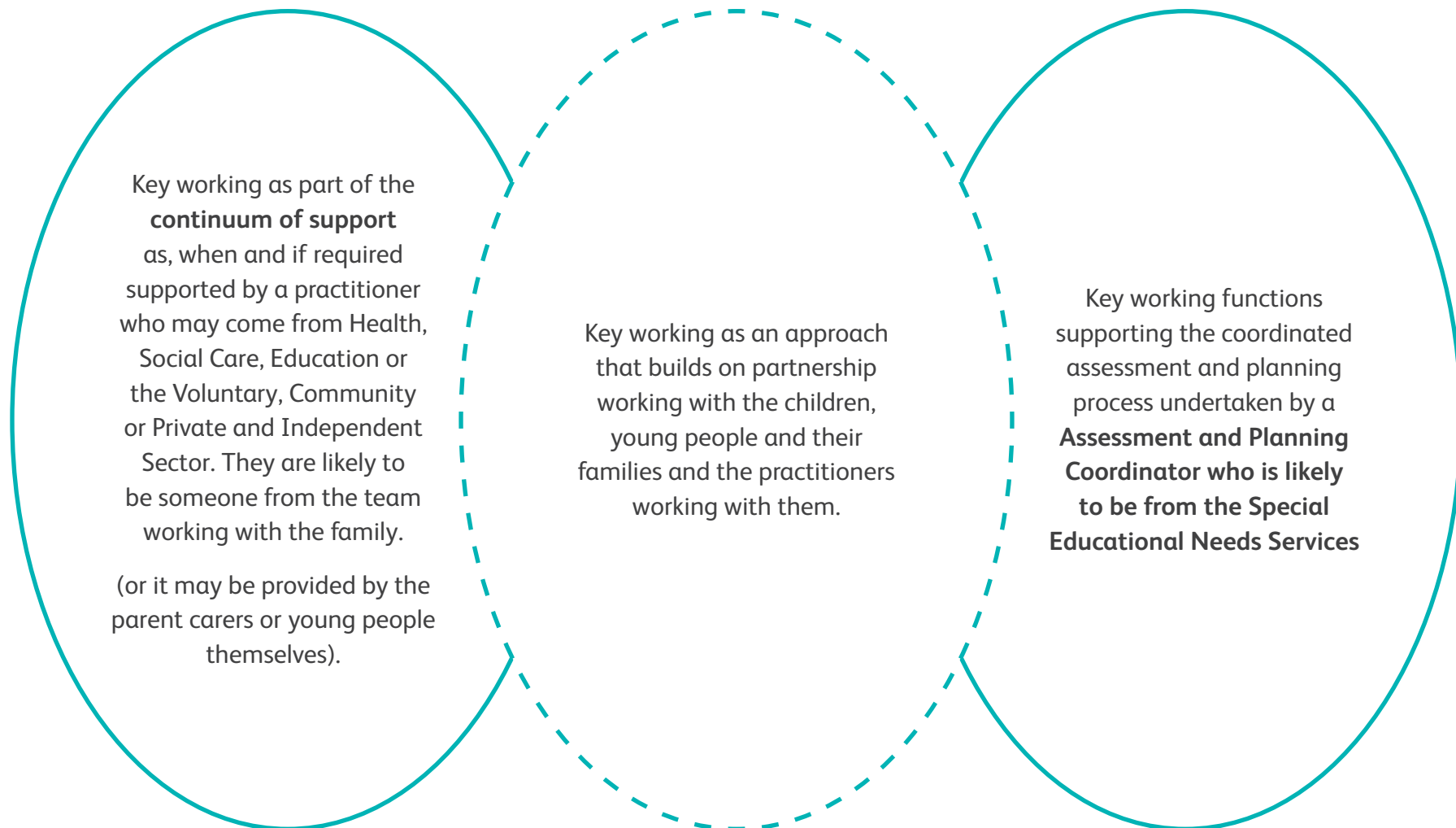
The Assessment and Planning Coordinator has a central role to play in ensuring that the coordinated assessment and planning process is completed in line with the Code of Practice and the legislation and within the statutory timescales. They will be drafting the Plan with families that will include statutory content. Therefore they will need clear lines of accountability into the governance arrangements for special educational needs and disability within the local authority and with the joint commissioning arrangements. Therefore it is most likely that they will be specialist staff based within the special educational needs service of the local authority.

If the Assessment and Planning Coordinator has not been directly involved with the child or young person prior to them entering the coordinated assessment and planning process phase of their lives, it is unlikely that they will have the capacity or the involvement to continue to be the person who is key working beyond the time of their involvement within this process.

Stages	Suggested key working functions to support each stage of the Assessment and Planning Framework
Enter	Single point of contact (related to the coordinated assessment and planning process)
Listen and understand	Identifying strengths and needs of family members; advocating; providing practical and emotional support (related to the coordinated assessment and planning process); providing information and sign posting; supporting and facilitating the coordinated assessment and planning process
Agree and allocate	Providing information and signposting; facilitate multi agency meetings
Planning	Co-ordinating practitioners and services around the child, young person and their families; enabling and empowering for decision making and the use of personal budgets; advocating; providing information and signposting; providing practical and emotional support
Review and learn	Identifying strengths; advocating; facilitating multi agency meetings; co-ordinating services

## Section 8: Key working continuum of support

This diagram illustrates the key working continuum of support throughout the child and young person's, and their family's lives, and as a specific, time-limited, integral part of the co-ordinated assessment and planning process leading to an EHCP.



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### **Other useful websites:**

#### **Department for Education:**

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health)

#### **Department of Health:**

[www.education.gov.uk/](http://www.education.gov.uk/)

#### **National Pathfinder:**

[www.sendpathfinder.co.uk/](http://www.sendpathfinder.co.uk/)

#### **Early Support:**

[www.ncb.org.uk/earllysupport](http://www.ncb.org.uk/earllysupport)

#### **In Control:**

[www.in-control.org.uk/](http://www.in-control.org.uk/)