



Early years and nursery

The aim of this fact sheet is to give you information and guidance if your children are starting nursery school. It includes information on tackling special educational needs.

Sometimes nurseries are reluctant to take children with heart conditions because of concerns about how to care for them. If you have this problem, you can ask your child's cardiac liaison nurse to speak to the nursery staff. Cardiac liaison nurses can explain to the nursery staff about your child's heart condition and are normally able to reassure them about any concerns they have.

Information for the nursery

It is important to give the nursery information about your child's heart condition such as:

- the name of your child's heart condition;
- your child's medical history including details of all the surgery they have had;
- the names of any drugs your child is taking;
- any side effects of drugs (for example, going to the toilet often, sensitivity to the sun, bleeding or bruising); and
- any symptoms your child may have such as blueness, tachycardia (a fast heartbeat), breathlessness and so on.

If your child does have symptoms such as blue spells, tiredness or breathlessness, explain to the staff what these mean and how best to deal with them. Again your child's cardiac liaison nurse (CLN) can be very helpful as they are trained to advise teachers and can often visit schools and nurseries.

Finally, a MedicAlert bracelet can be a useful extra reminder about your child's heart condition and other specific information such as allergies. The MedicAlert bracelet is also useful in emergencies to let medical staff know about the problem. To find out more about these bracelets, phone: **0800 581420** or visit www.medicalert.org.uk.

Special educational needs

Some children with heart conditions may also have difficulties such as developmental and learning delays, problems with communication or behaviour issues. If you think your child is experiencing difficulties like these, they may have what are called 'special educational needs'. This means that they will need extra support at nursery and maybe later on when they start school.

All nurseries must support children with special educational needs under the National Standards for Daycare. If you think your child will need extra support at nursery, you can ask to speak to your child's teachers or SENCO (special educational needs coordinator). They will discuss your child's needs with you and assess them.

Early-years action

The nursery may decide to put your child on an early-years action plan which will outline extra activities or help for your child. The help could mean:

- a different way of teaching certain things;
- some help from an extra adult; or
- different activities suited to your child's needs.

This help may be written down in a document called an individual action plan (IEP) which shows what your child's needs are, how they will be dealt with and what the targets are.

Early-years action plus

In some cases, your child may need support from other specialists as well, for example, a speech therapist or educational psychologist. In this case, a new IEP should be drawn up so your child can benefit from outside help.

Statement of special educational needs

If your child needs a lot of support which cannot be met by the nursery alone, you may want the education department to assess their special educational needs, which may result in a statement of special educational needs. This is done after consulting you, your child (as far as possible), and education, health and social-service professionals.

Statements of special educational needs outline what your child's needs are and what action needs to be taken to deal with them. Help in the nursery could be, for example, a therapist coming in, special equipment being provided, or extra help being made available.

From the postbag

'She said 'What should I do if Callum becomes unconscious?' – I advised her to call for an ambulance and let the parents know.'

'Nursery has coped wonderfully – I feel ashamed of how worried I was.'

'When I came to get him he was wearing his coat in a warm room, because he looked blue to the staff. I realised then I'd forgotten to explain a few things about Sam that had become so normal for me now.'

More information

You can find out more on how to access the right care and support for your child's special educational needs in our booklet 'Overcoming the obstacles' which you can be order by calling our freephone infoline on **0808 808 5000** or download from our website at **www.chfed.org.uk**. You may also want to order or download our fact sheet 'Information for teachers'. Other useful sources of information include:

- **Teachernet** – www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/parentcarers/;
- **Surestart** – www.surestart.gov.uk; &
- **Portage** – a national charity providing a home-visiting educational service for pre-school children with extra support needs and their families www.portage.org.uk.



Free Infoline 0808 808 5000

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