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Challenges in SEND Provision: Understanding the Barriers Facing Children, Parents and Education Staff

Introduction

I am researching about the challenges facing staff, parents and children with Send needs. SEN children face challenges such as insufficient funding and resources. gaps in staff expertise, curriculum and assessment limitations. Also, social interaction difficulties and bullying. Stress can be for families and the child, and this can affect their overall attainment. They can also have social and emotional challenges, lack of parental awareness of child's needs and involvement as some parents do not understand their child's needs and may be in denial. This can lead to misunderstanding and stress. Parents have to often battle in getting an assessment for an EHC plan due to funding shortages, or local authorities setting higher criteria than legally required.

Research Topic Identification

One of the main challenges children with special educational needs and their families face is getting an Education Health and Care Plan. This is a legal document for an individual with SEN from the ages of 0 to 25 years old. This used to be the 'Statements of special education needs', with this document the primary focus was on education. Now EHCP has replaced these statements and integrated three key areas: education, health and care into one document. This plan sets out a description of their educational, social, health care needs and the provisions that must be put into place to support these individuals.

Individuals with SEN may have long term needs that are generally quite complex and long-lasting, so a school may not be able to provide adequate support. Parents believe that if their child attains an EHCP they will most likely get one-to-one help or extra interventions.

However, the EHCP specifies targets on it that staff aim to achieve through interventions, collaborative support approach and regular monitoring and reviewing. For example, a child may receive an intervention over a six-week, delivered three times per week. At the end of the six weeks, a review will be conducted to determine whether the child is making progress towards their target. Children with SEN may make progress at a slower pace compared to

their peers without SEN. Therefore, every small step represents a significant achievement for these children.

Researching the difficulties involved in acquiring an EHCP is essential for parents and guardians, as it helps them understand the complexity of the process. I am exploring this topic as I have an active role within the education sector and provide support to children with SEN. The EHCP process begins with an initial request for an assessment, which the local authority within 6 weeks. If the request is approved, the local authority then gathers detailed information from relevant professionals. This includes teachers, therapists and parents to determine their needs. However, many of these children experience lengthy delays before an EHCP is issued. In the absence of an EHCP, a child receives support through the general provision available within the school, which is managed using existing resources. The four information sources that I have chosen to discuss are Google Scholar, Gov.uk, Independent Provider of Special Education Advice (IPSCA) and the National Health Service (NHS).

Research Tools

Google Scholar:

This tool allows users to search for a wide range of scholarly literature, including journal articles, theses, books and conference papers from academic publishers, professional societies and online repositories. It is free and user-friendly resource designed to support researchers and students in locating academic materials. Users can investigate the work of a specific author by searching their name or the title of a particular publication. The tool also facilitates the examination of citation networks and provides access to grey literature, such as reports and working papers, which may not be available through other research platforms.

Additionally, articles related EHCPs can be identified by incorporating relevant keywords to refine and narrow the research focus. For example, 'support or provision', 'delays or waiting times'. Google Scholar can also be used to find academic research on EHCPs, including studies on the experiences of families and professionals, as well as and statistical analyses of provision. When conducting searches on Google Scholar, users will find a wide range of scholarly articles and reports relevant to these topics.

GOV.UK

GOV.UK is the primary official source for information on EHCPs, providing detailed guidance on the legal framework, eligibility criteria and statutory responsibilities of local authorities. It also includes access to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of

practice, which outlines the duties of schools, health services and local authorities, and provides clear guidance for professionals and parents on the EHCP process. The Code of Practice also explains the rights of children and young people and sets out expectations for collaborative working across education, health and social care services.

Independent Provider of Special Education Advice (IPSCA)

The IPSCA is a registered charity that offers free, independent and legally based education advice to parents of children and young people, with special educational needs in England. Their website offers comprehensive information on all aspects of EHCPs, including what an EHCP must contain, how to appeal decisions and how to enforce a plan. This site also provides step-by-step guides on EHCP assessments, appealing to the SEN Tribunal, and the legal requirements for each section of the plan.

National Health Service (NHS)

NHS is an official source of health information for England and is the UK's largest health platform. It provides reliable guidance on symptoms, conditions and treatments, as well as tools for locating local NHS services such as GPs, opticians and hospitals. To ensure that its content is accurate, safe and up to date, the NHS sources peer-reviewed scientific research from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). The NHS website also provides specific information regarding EHCPs for children and young people. In addition, it offers general guidance and works in partnership with other organisations to support children with special educational needs.

Data Collection

Primary Data

Primary data refers to original information collected directly from first-hand sources for a specific research purpose. This may be gathered through methods such as surveys, interviews and questionnaires, allowing the data to be tailored precisely to the needs of the current study. Although primary data collection can be time consuming and potentially costly, the researcher maintains full control over the process, ensuring that the information obtained is directly relevant and generally more accurate for the intended research objectives.

Secondary Data

Secondary data refers to information that has already been collected by another individual or organisation for a different purpose. It is readily accessible and represents a cost-effective alternative to primary data. Examples of secondary data include company records,

biographies, books and journal article. One of its main advantages is that it is both time-effective and economical, as the data is already available for analysis.

Research Methodology

Quantitative Research

Quantitative research focuses on the collection of numerical data to test hypotheses and uncover statistical patterns. Structured methods commonly used in quantitative research include surveys with closed-ended questions, experiments and controlled observations. Data is collected in the form of numbers or measurements. The data collected typically consists of numbers or measurable data. For example, height in feet, age in years or weight in pounds. Quantitative research is particularly useful when a researcher needs to quantify a problem and answer questions such as *How many?*, *What?* and *How often?*.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a method used to gather and analyse non-numerical data, such as opinions, experiences and perceptions, in order to gain a deeper understanding of a topic. Data can be collected through interviews, focus groups and observations. This type of data is widely utilised in fields such as education, health, psychology and social sciences, where understanding individual perspectives and contextual factors is essential. This approach focuses on explaining *how and why* human behaviours occur, rather than simply measuring it.

My Research

Secondary data would be appropriate for my research because an EHCP contains elements such as educational attainment, health and social care details and personal background information. An example of this is completed student work demonstrating progress, as well as classroom observations that allow an insight into a student's participation and learning style.

Qualitative research would be appropriate because approaches such as classroom observations, interviews with parents and the exploration of family history are inherently qualitative in nature. A needs assessment may take many different formats, and qualitative data allows for a detailed understanding of the child's experiences and the context surrounding their support needs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the key challenges SEN children face in obtaining an EHCP include significant delays in the assessment and the review processes. Additional difficulties arise from limited access to specialists required for assessments, alongside many families needing to appeal decisions through the SEND tribunal. For parents, the experience can feel isolating and overwhelming, particularly lengthy waits for an EHCP to be issued, outdated and unclear plans, and challenges in securing appropriate school provisions. The delays are often linked to financial constraints and pressure on local authorities.

Despite these challenges, there are notable advantages to an EHCP. The plan is legally binding, meaning that the provision specified must be delivered. It is also tailored to the individual needs of the child and places a strong focus on their development and wellbeing. Furthermore, an EHCP provides parents with greater influence over the child's educational placement and ensures that support is coordinated across education, health and social care.

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