

Support that understands and meets our needs

Young people shared their experiences where systems had failed, however they identified what good could and should look like for all young people who have health needs, disabilities and complex circumstances.

Good practice is not complicated; it is consistent, compassionate and coordinated.

Young people suggested that **Good practice:**

- ✓ Provides support early.
- ✓ Listens to the young person.
- ✓ Adapts environments—not expectations.
- ✓ Plans with families.
- ✓ Responds to physical and mental health needs together.
- ✓ Keeps young people *in* education, not out of it.
- ✓ Works together to put in the right people, the right support at the right time.
- ✓ Supports young people to achieve their full potential, alongside their peers

Below is more of the detail discussed by young people and supporters.

1. Early, Proactive Support (Before an EHCP)

Good practice means no child is left without support while waiting for an EHCP. Schools receive funding to provide reasonable adjustments before formal plans exist. This early support can prevent crisis, reduce exclusion, and keep a young person in education.

This could look like:

- An Individualised Learning Plan (ILP) implemented immediately
- Timely physical & emotional support (e.g. help with fatigue, safe spaces, pacing)
- A consistent adult/key worker who knew her needs
- Monitoring of health-related barriers to attendance
- Cross team and multidisciplinary working

2. Listening to the Young Person as a Source of Evidence

EHCP decisions must be informed by school paperwork, and by the young person's own voice. Good practice honours the principle "Nothing about me without me."

This could look like:

- Lived experience and medical evidence taken seriously
- Youth voice considered valid even when school paperwork was lacking
- Collaboration across health, education, and family to build a full picture

3. Consistent, Accessible Physical Support

Physical disability should never result in isolation or exclusion from learning. Good practice says that if a school claims to be inclusive, it must be inclusive for wheelchair users too.

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Good provision could include:

- Access to a power chair without gatekeeping
- Safe support to navigate the school without relying on ad hoc staff
- Staff trained in safe moving, handling, and managing fluctuating conditions
- Accessible timetables, buildings, and classrooms

4. Integrated Mental Health Support

Mental health and physical health are deeply connected; schools must understand that. Complexity is a cue for support—not a reason to remove a young person from school.

Things that could help include:

- Staff trained in the interplay between chronic illness and mental health
- A mental health support plan developed with CAMHS and family
- A predictable structure, safe relationships, and regular wellbeing check ins
- No exclusions because needs are perceived as “too complex”

5. Positive, Solution Focused Inclusion

Young people shouldn’t be told “no”, or that they are “too risky”, or “too complex”. Good practice flips that mindset. Schools and colleges should be welcoming young people by planning with them, not by gatekeeping provision.

Inclusion could be supported through asking questions and being affirming:

- ? “How can we make this work safely and successfully?”
- ? “What adjustments will remove the barriers?”
- ! “We will work with you, not around you.”

6. A Fair, Timely, Well-Supported EHCP Process

There should be transparent timelines, proper evidence-gathering, no young person left without education while waiting and no refusal because institutions didn’t complete paperwork. Young people should never have to battle the system just to access support they clearly need.

7. Accessible Exam Arrangements

Good practice ensures that every student can sit exams locally, safely, and with dignity. This would reduce stress and fatigue which for some can be barriers to achieving their potential grades

This could include:

- Exam centres willing to accept private candidates
- Centres trained to accommodate wheelchair users
- No need to travel out of area for basic assessment access