

## Setting outcomes: a guide

A major feature of the new SEN reforms is that the system is driven by outcomes. These can be outcomes for a population – such as increasing the health and wellbeing of the general population of children and young people in the area – or individual outcomes – such as a particular child or young person achieving paid employment.

This resource will focus on setting individual outcomes and is particularly relevant for children and young people who are eligible for an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan. When drawing up a plan, children, young people and parents will be encouraged to work with professionals to set the outcomes that they wish to see achieved, with the aim that the support provided will then be based on helping people achieve them.

What this means is that outcomes are essential to ensuring that a child or young person gets the support they need to achieve their potential. If the outcomes set are not reflective of someone's ambitions, then the interventions someone receives could be wrong for them.

### **What is an outcome?**

Outcomes are the changes that you are trying to achieve. These can be changes in behaviour, skills, knowledge, attitudes, and circumstances. Outcomes result from what we do, such as a particular intervention or activity (these interventions could be the support that is listed in someone's EHC Plan). For example, the outcome of 5 hours of speech and language therapy could be increased communication skills.

Outcomes can be short, medium or long term.



## How do you set outcomes?

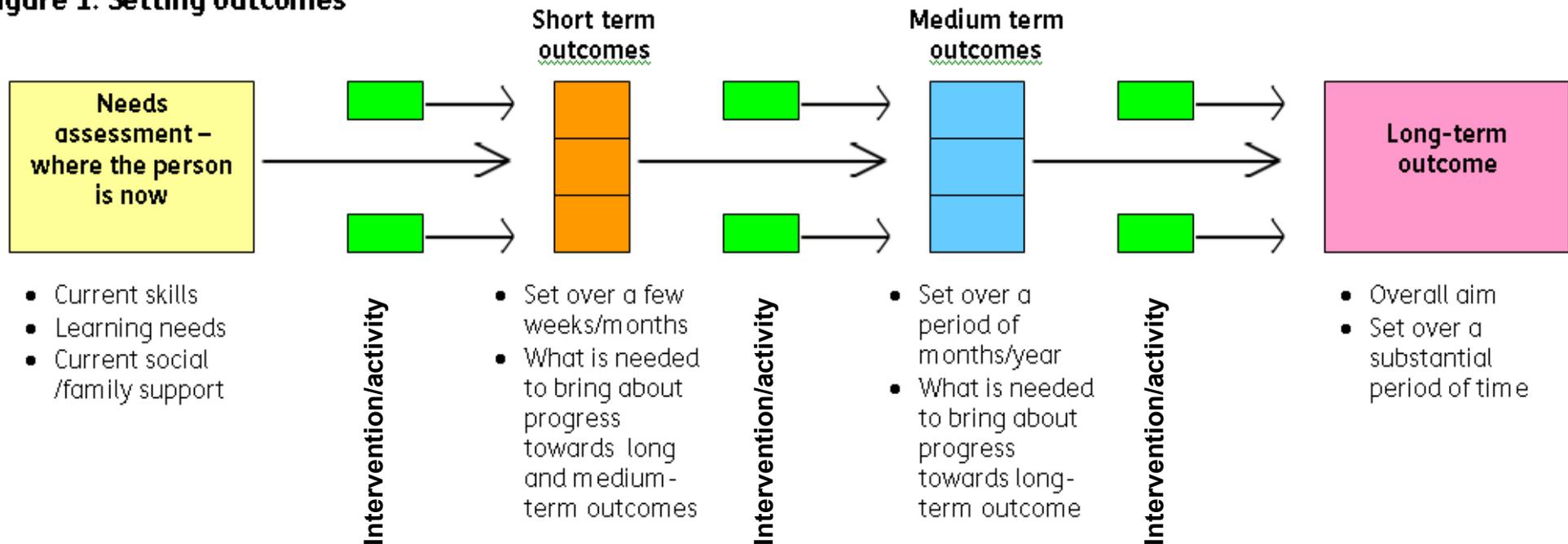
When setting outcomes, it is important to initially establish a picture of 'where we are now'; for example, what are someone's current skills and learning needs? From there, you can establish a long-term outcome; this is essentially the overall aim for the individual to achieve.

Following this, it is a case of working backwards; to look at what differences need to be brought about in order to achieve the overall aim. These are known as short and medium term outcomes. For short term outcomes, these are typically what changes you would expect to see in a few weeks or months and medium term outcomes follow a slightly longer trajectory. Although the nature and timeframes of short and medium term outcomes will vary depending on the person, it would make sense for medium term outcomes to be yearly, so that they can be set or reviewed as part of an annual review process (such as a review of an EHC Plan).

When outcomes have been established, it is important to think about what intervention or activity is needed in order to make them happen.

Parents and young people must be involved in decisions about setting outcomes and children should also be involved as far as possible.

**Figure 1: Setting outcomes**

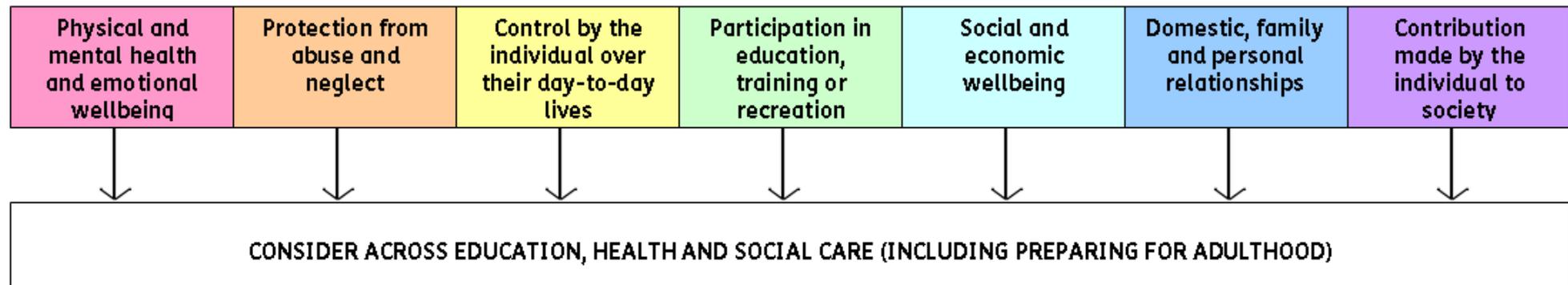


## What kind of outcomes can be sought?

It is important to embrace the full scope of areas under which outcomes are set. If they are to appear in an EHC Plan, they must, of course, have relevance to education, health and/or social care. In addition, the government has stated that, from the age of 14, outcomes must focus on helping someone to 'prepare for adulthood'; specifically, preparing for independent living, finding employment, and accommodation. While these categories set a particular scope for outcomes to be considered under, it is important that families and local authorities do not feel limited in the breadth of areas of someone's life that outcomes can cover.

Setting outcomes should be done in a person-centred way to reflect their individual goals and aspirations. This can be done in a number of different ways, and should of course be to an individual's preference. However, one approach you may wish to take is to look at the 7 areas being used to measure someone's wellbeing and set outcomes under one or more of these:

**Figure 2: Outcome areas**



**Examples:**

- Increased confidence
- Improve or manage health conditions

**Examples:**

- Understanding/cooperating with rules
- Feeling happy and safe in school or the community

**Examples:**

- Living independently in the community
- Developing choice-making skills

**Examples:**

- Move into further/higher education
- Undertake a particular course

**Examples:**

- Gaining employment
- Managing own finances

**Examples:**

- Making new /developing existing friendships
- Improving communication skills

**Examples:**

- Volunteering in the local community
- Increased participation in school/college activities

## Evaluation

It is important to bear in mind that the entire process of setting outcomes is based on making assumptions about the child or young person. There are assumptions made about someone's ability to achieve their long-term outcome, there are assumptions about the causes of a problem that an intervention seeks to address, there are assumptions that a particular intervention will be effective for the particular individual.

It is therefore important to ensure that progress towards outcomes is evaluated regularly. This will give families and local authorities the opportunity to identify whether interventions are working, whether outcomes are still relevant/desirable, and also whether any unintended consequences have arisen, such as any negative impact on siblings or other pupils.

### Measuring progress towards outcomes

Sometimes progress is easy to measure, such as whether someone has got a job, and sometimes they are more difficult concepts to measure definitive progress, such as someone's increased confidence. There are various tools used to measure outcomes, but they can also be seen by asking a child or young person about any changes that might have happened, asking them to keep diary entries or simply by observing any changes from normal, such as whether someone has made new friends, whether they have started going to any after school clubs, or whether they are more vocal at home or in social groups.

Progress is an entirely personal thing; what might be progress for one person might not constitute progression for someone else. For some people with profound a multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) or chronic health conditions, progress might even be to maintain a particular level.

### Family involvement

It is important that everyone involved in the child or young person's life – from parents, to local authorities, to schools – is fully on board with the process of setting outcomes. Without this all-round support, there is only so much a child or young person can achieve. For example, without school support to provide a child or young person with the correct course to learn the appropriate skills, or without parental support to encourage a child or young person's future ambitions, it may not be possible for them to achieve an outcome of getting employment. One way to help increase the buy-in of everyone in the child or young person's life is for them to jointly set targets. These are markers to determine whether the progress towards the outcomes has been adequate – so, for example, a target could be to join a youth club.

Evaluation of outcomes and progress towards them should be done regularly. Again, this will vary depending on the individual and the outcomes set, but it would make sense for this to be combined with existing reviews such as annual reviews. EHC Plan should be reviewed at least annually and parents and young people have a right to request a review or a reassessment of a plan and a local authority must ensure this happens unless it is less than 6 months since the assessment was conducted.

## Case study: Jonny

