

Designated Medical/Clinical Officer

The DCO provides the point of contact for local authorities, schools and colleges seeking health advice on CYP who may have SEN or disabilities, and provides a contact (or contacts) for CCGs or health providers so that appropriate notification can be given to the local authority of children under compulsory school age who they think may have SEN or disabilities. The DCO can support schools with their duties under the 'Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions' guidance. The DCO would not routinely be involved in assessments or planning for individuals, except in the course of their usual clinical practice, but would be responsible for ensuring that assessment, planning and health support is carried out. Some CCGs may delegate key decisions to the DCO (for example, agreeing the health services in an EHC plan).

The DCO should have an appropriate level of clinical expertise to enable them to exercise these functions effectively, and should be designated as the DCO in their job description. There may be one DCO for several CCGs and local authorities, where there are joint arrangements or shared commissioning responsibilities, and given the age range of EHC plans from birth to 25, the DCO may need to liaise with colleagues outside paediatrics.

The role of the DCO is to:

- Maximise outcomes for CYP with SEND by working to improve quality of life, school absences, secondary mental and physical health conditions, personal autonomy and engagement in further education and employment
- Play a strategic role in relation to the SEND agenda, developing, improving and influencing service design and delivery
- Provide an expert resource for CYP health information, guidance, reassurance and support for families and professionals
- Attend multi agency panels and support decision making on the basis of clinical judgement
- Challenge and approve packages for CYP with SEND
- Co-ordinate and pull together information from various services involved with the CYP (current and historic involvement)
- Develop processes for the quality assurance of the finalised EHCPs and the input from Health Colleagues
- Undertake trend analysis for the CYP cohorts and identify commissioning gaps to inform future commissioning
- Make and follow up safeguarding referrals
- Liaison with professions from health providers both internally and externally to ensure that all relevant health information is available to support EHC decision making at panel and provide longer term specialised and strategic oversight