



# Health and safety matters for special educational needs: Moving and handling

## 1 Introduction

This guidance is one of a series concerned with health and safety matters for special educational needs. It applies to the range of special educational needs that may be present in an educational environment, ranging from minor impairments through to more serious conditions. Details of other titles in this series can be found at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/index.htm>.

It is intended principally for action by education employers who have disabled<sup>1</sup> students and/or students with special educational needs (SEN).<sup>2</sup> These may include local education authorities (LEAs), school governing bodies, principals and head teachers.

It advises on safe moving and handling as part of the management of employees' and students' health and safety and aims to help employers comply with their legal responsibilities.<sup>3</sup> It will also be relevant to employees, students (which for the purposes of this guidance includes pupils), carers (which for the purposes of this guidance includes parents) and visitors eg visiting professionals, members of the public or contractors.

## 2 Background

Manual handling (lifting, supporting, carrying, pushing and pulling by bodily force) is one of the most common causes of strain and sprain injury and back pain in all areas of education. Poor manual handling techniques can also result in injury to the student. In 2001/02 it is estimated that 1.1 million people in Great Britain suffered from work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs).<sup>4</sup> During this period this type of complaint accounted for an estimated 12.3 million lost working days - 19.4 days per person. In 1995/96 MSDs were estimated to cost society £5.7 billion.

Some disabled students and students with SEN may require specialist manual handling, treatment or facilities. Teachers and teacher assistants might be called upon to deal with issues they have not had to address before. This is particularly likely when students

<sup>1</sup> 'Disabled students' includes all students who have 'an impairment or condition which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to undertake normal day to day activities' (Disability Discrimination Act 1995). Under the Act school governing bodies, further education colleges and universities have a legal duty not to discriminate against disabled students and to take reasonable steps to avoid placing disabled students at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled students.

<sup>2</sup> Students have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty that calls for special educational provision to be made for them, even if a statement is not maintained (see Section 312 of the Education Act 1996). (In Scotland, the Record of Needs process, established by the Education (Scotland) Act

with severe or complex SEN are taught in a mainstream setting or 'special' targeted provision. Students may not be able to recognise everyday hazards, communicate distress, or move around independently.

Educational employers have to balance the health and safety of employees with the needs of the students, while respecting the human rights of both. If the risks are managed properly, this balance can be achieved without exposing employees to an unacceptable level of risk from the manual lifting of people.

## 3 Guiding principles

- There should be a balance between the health and safety considerations of employees and individual students' rights to dignity, autonomy and privacy.
- Health and safety of employees should be sustained, but it is not an excuse for denying disabled students and students with SEN access to educational opportunities.
- Effective management of health and safety considerations for disabled students and students with SEN should allow them the same opportunities as other students in mainstream education.

## 4 Legal responsibilities

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended) require employers to:

- avoid the need for hazardous manual handling, as far as reasonably practicable;
- assess the risk of injury from hazardous manual handling that can't be avoided; and
- reduce the risk of injury from hazardous manual handling, as far as reasonably practicable.

1980.) In Scotland, other key legislation includes the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000, the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, the Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002, and the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, which introduces a new framework built around the concept of additional support needs, a much broader concept than SEN. Employers also have responsibilities under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Employers' responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended).

<sup>4</sup> Self-reported work-related illness in 2001/02: Results from a household survey.

## 5 What do educational employers need to do?

- Conduct general risk assessments for the main hazards. Develop generic risk control policies and procedures. These should include defined roles and responsibilities. The policies and procedures should be developed in consultation with employees, student representatives etc and should be appropriate, effective and regularly reviewed.
- Carry out generic manual handling risk assessments. These should include the tasks that may be necessary, the environment, and the individual capability of employees and assistants who may be involved. They should identify the steps that need to be taken to manage risk in general terms and the control measures for mobility assistance and other manual handling risks (see Appendix 2). The risk assessment should consider both routine manual handling and emergency situations when manual-handling procedures may have to be adapted (eg evacuation in the event of a fire).
- Apply and modify the generic risk assessment to suit the individual circumstances of each student with mobility needs (see Appendix 1). The individual risk assessment will help inform the procedures for that student's needs. Procedures should be developed with the student or their representatives. An individual's needs might vary day-to-day and even during the course of a day.
- Link the individual's moving and handling assessments with the overall package for that individual's care to ensure continuity and familiarity. All employees should adopt the same handling techniques when assisting students with moving and handling to ensure a consistent and safe approach. This will help to keep the student calm and reduce the risk of struggling, sudden movement or violence.
- Set out the assessments in a simple and suitable format and language. This ensures they are easy to understand and the needs of the individual students are met. The information must be readily available to all employees involved in assisting the student.

Wherever possible, conduct the risk assessments and identify the needs of the individual student before they attend the educational establishment - the educational employers should seek to receive information on students in advance.

- Provide training in moving and handling for all employees before undertaking any manual handling duties. This should include use of equipment where necessary. Some employees who assist SEN students may also need training in risk assessment. Training is not a one-off event and risk assessments need frequent revision. Employers should reassess the need for refresher training regularly as individual's needs can vary over a short time period.
- Record and monitor sickness absence as well as incident reports, to ensure that risk control measures are adequate.

The following case studies illustrate what can go wrong where a risk assessment has failed. Each provides solutions and control measures to prevent it reoccurring. The solutions/control measures in each of the case studies may be further improved to reduce the risk of injury.

### Case study 1

A student with a broken leg returned to school following a hospital stay. Employees were concerned about how they would manage the young person's impaired mobility and wanted to send him home. An individual risk assessment was required, related to the physical environment. After discussion with his carers, reasonable adjustment could have been made to accommodate him.

### Solutions/control measures

A suitable risk assessment needed to be carried out and adjustments made to the young person's day. This could have included delaying class attendance to avoid crowds, providing assistance to and from classes and explaining whether extra support could be made available for a limited time period. Relevant professionals and the carer should be involved in the assessment process.

### Case study 2

A teacher at a special school for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties suffered an acute back strain after repetitive lifting of students throughout a school day. An assessment of moving and handling operations had not been carried out. No mechanical lifting aids were available, and no training had been provided for the teacher. As a result the teacher was off work for six months. A generic risk assessment would have identified this as a significant manual handling risk to the employee. The risk of injury could have been avoided with appropriate mechanical aids and relevant training.

### Solutions/control measures

The risks can be avoided or minimised in a number of ways. Where possible, manual moving and handling should be avoided. If that is not possible then the risks should be reduced by the use of mechanical aids. Appropriate training in safer handling techniques should back this up. This includes how to recognise hazardous handling situations and how to determine a safer approach. Establishing good communication systems helps to cultivate understanding and co-operation between employees, students and carers.

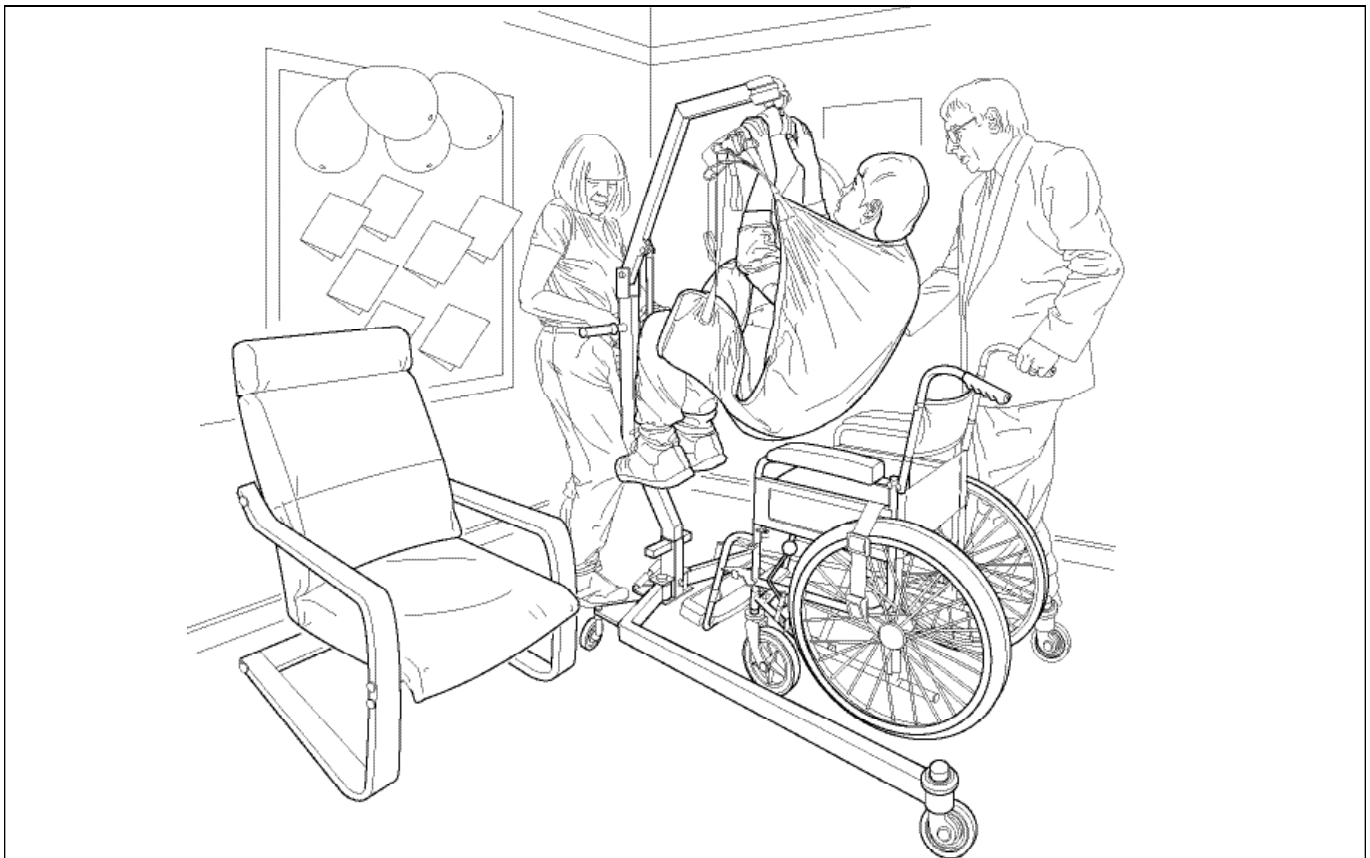


Figure 1 An example of good practice - the use of a mechanical aid to lift and move a disabled student

### Case study 3

A student with spina bifida relies on support when she is being transferred from her wheelchair to the toilet. During the transfer the employee slipped and both student and employee were injured.

An individual risk assessment would have identified the risks of injury with this transfer. With relevant training and the use of mechanical aids this risk of injury could have been avoided.

#### Solutions/control measures

A proper risk assessment needed to be carried out before the task was undertaken, including the physical environment/accessibility. A restricted workspace might affect the ability to assist a student properly. The risks can be avoided or minimised in a number of ways by the use of handling aids. One such aid is a moulded plastic shell with an aperture for toileting, which could be used with a hoist. Wherever possible, similar techniques to those used at home should be employed. Arrangements should be made for regular and emergency cleaning of equipment, which may become soiled during toileting.

## 6 Involving the workforce

Employers are required by law to consult their employees, or their representatives, on health and safety matters. They must consult all employees in good time about any changes to the workplace or work activities that may affect health and safety. Experience shows that workplaces are safer when employees are involved.

Consultation can work through different routes. If there are no safety representatives or active safety committees then the employer must arrange to consult directly with employees. The precise arrangements depend on the size and structure of the organisation. The end result must be a workforce that is informed and confident that potential hazards have been identified and controlled.

## 7 Involving students and carers

Involving the student and the carer in the risk assessment process is helpful in identifying hazards that might otherwise have been overlooked.<sup>5</sup> The student will have views on how they wish to be assisted, and the carer may have considerable experience in moving and assisting. There may be circumstances when a carer has developed manual handling techniques that are inappropriate for

employees, eg carer carrying out uncoordinated transfer, in which case dialogue and discussion can help produce a positive outcome for all parties.

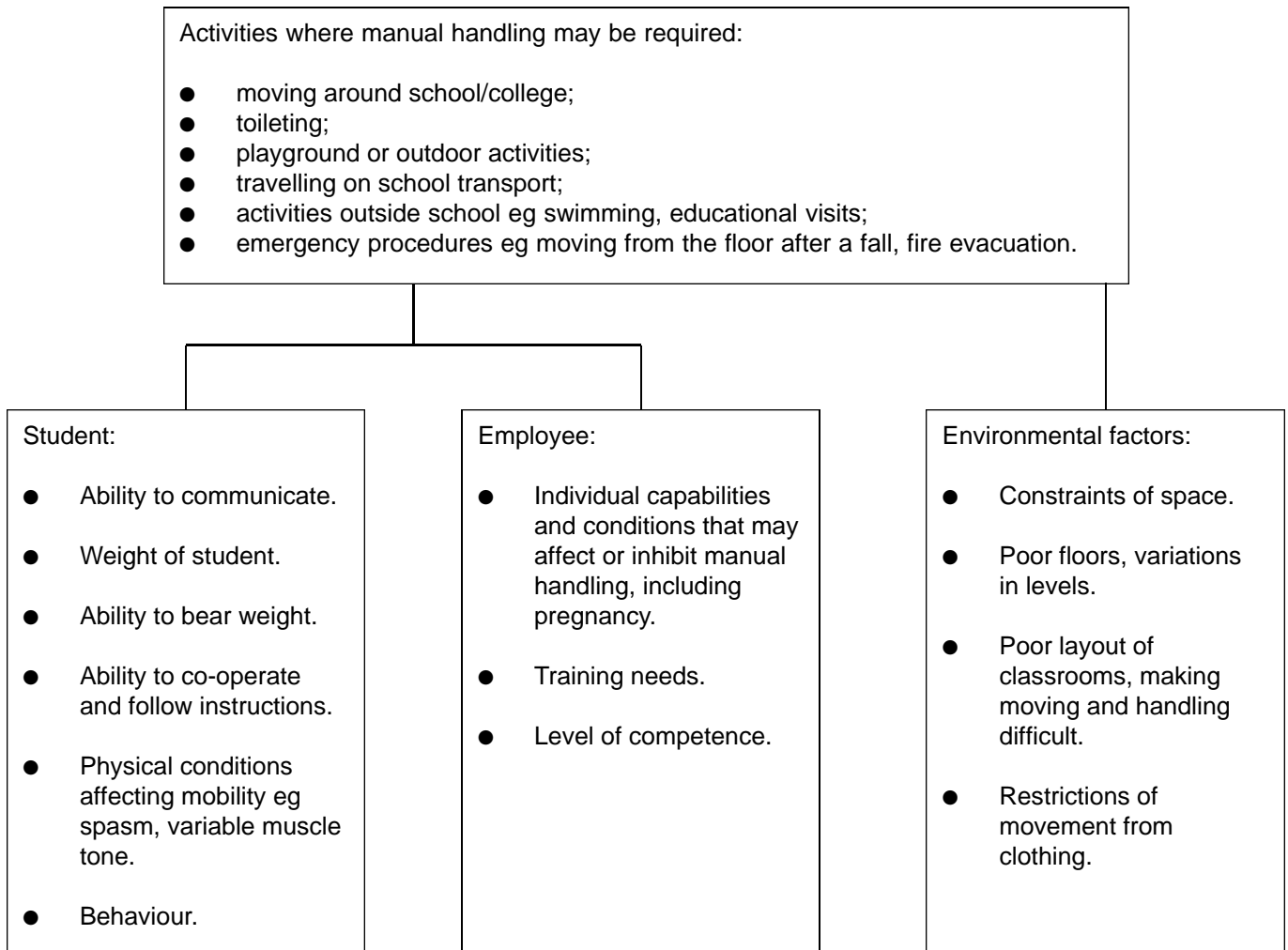
## 8 Need more help?

Guidance on risk assessment and the law is given in *Health and safety matters for special educational needs: Legal issues including risk assessment*. Go to [www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/information.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/information.htm) for details.

Appendix 1 gives factors to consider when making an individual risk assessment on manual handling. Other guidance in this series will be developed for providers of education for students with SEN, eg guidance on violence and aggression, the use of warm water pools.

<sup>5</sup> This also meets the General Teaching Requirement for Health and Safety in the National Curriculum in England and similar provisions in the school curricula in Scotland and Wales.

**Appendix 1: Examples of factors to be considered when making an individual risk assessment**



**Appendix 2: Some generic risk factors and control measures for mobility assistance**

<b>Risk factor</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Control measures</b>
Moving and handling students	Transferring student between equipment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● chair to wheelchair;</li> <li>● wheelchair to standing frame;</li> <li>● chair to changing table or toilet.</li> </ul> Lifting student from floor in or after an emergency.	Use slide sheets, banana boards, hoists, turntables, chairs with removable side arms and/or toilet risers. Always refer to <i>individual care plan</i> to ensure correct equipment and moves are used. Use inflatable cushion to bring student to more suitable height to move. In a confined space, eg a toilet cubicle, consider use of slide sheet to move student to position where cushion can be used.
Moving and handling objects	Moving equipment, furniture.	Plan the move to ensure adequate space and consider lifting with two people. Use trolleys or other handling aids or hoists wherever possible to move items. Determine maximum loading.
Posture of employees	Leaning/stooping over desks/tables.  Small equipment eg chairs. Holding student during treatment.	Use ergonomically assessed workstations. Sit wherever possible rather than stoop. Employees to use adult chairs wherever possible. Wherever possible adopt best, most comfortable posture before starting procedure, try to use equipment to support weight if possible eg use standing frame while treatment administered (rather than the carer providing support).
Pushing and pulling	Pushing and pulling wheelchairs and other mobility aids.	Ensure equipment is regularly maintained to ensure wheels run smoothly. Ensure floor surface kept in good order to allow smooth running of wheels. Good housekeeping to avoid obstacles and provide ramps where needed. Avoid steep slopes.
Potential for unpredictable behaviour	Moving and handling students who may move suddenly or struggle.	Talk to the student; 'unpredictable' behaviour is more likely when students do not understand what is happening to them. Plan the move in advance, refer to the individual care plan, anticipate movement where possible and make sure all equipment is available and ready to use.
Environmental issues, space constraints and floor surfaces	All activities.	Good housekeeping to ensure routes kept clear, free from obstructions and slip/trip hazards. Plan activities to ensure easy movement and sufficient space for handling tasks. Ensure refurbishment plans consider moving/handling needs.

## Further information

(Priced publications may be available for free loan from the public library.)

## Useful guidance

*Manual handling. Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended). Guidance on Regulations L23* (Third edition) HSE Books 2004 ISBN 0 7176 2823 X

*Handing home care: Achieving safe, efficient and positive outcomes for care workers and clients* HSG225 HSE Books 2002 ISBN 0 7176 2228 2

*Getting to grips with manual handling: A short guide* Leaflet INDG143(rev2) HSE Books 2004 (single copy free or priced packs of 15 ISBN 0 7176 2828 0) (Free download from: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk))

*A pain in your workplace? Ergonomic problems and solutions* HSG121 HSE Books 1994 ISBN 0 7176 0668 6

*Understanding ergonomics at work: Reduce accidents and ill health and increase productivity by fitting the task to the worker* Leaflet INDG90(rev2) HSE Books 2003 (single copy free or priced packs of 15 ISBN 0 7176 2599 0) (Free download from: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk))

*Manual handling. Solutions you can handle* HSG115 HSE Books 1994 ISBN 0 7176 0693 7

## Other guidance on manual handling

*The guide to the handling of patients: Introducing a safer handling policy* (Fourth edition) National Back Pain Association 1998 ISBN 0 9530582 5 5 (Available from: [www.backcare.org.uk](http://www.backcare.org.uk))

*The home care worker's handbook: The essential guide to care in the home* United Kingdom Home Care Association Ltd 1998 ISBN 0 9534243 2 4

*Safer handling of people in the community* National Back Pain Association 1999 ISBN 0 9530582 7 1

## Other publications

*Safe use of work equipment. Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L22* (Second edition) HSE Books 1998 ISBN 0 7176 1626 6

*Safe use of lifting equipment. Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L113* HSE Books 1998 ISBN 0 7176 1628 2

*Access to education for children and young people with medical needs* DfES/0732/2001 Department for Education and Skills 2001 (Available from the DfES Publications Centre Tel: 0845 602 2260, and online at: [www.dfes.gov.uk/sickchildren](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/sickchildren))

## Managing health and safety

*Successful health and safety management* HSG65 (Second edition) HSE Books 1997 ISBN 0 7176 1276 7

*Managing health and safety. Five steps to success* Leaflet INDG275 HSE Books 1998 (single copy free or priced packs of 10 ISBN 0 7176 2170 7) (Free download from: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk))

*Five steps to risk assessment* Leaflet INDG163(rev1) HSE Books 1998 (single copy free or priced packs of 10 ISBN 0 7176 1565 0) (Free download from: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk))

*Safety policies in the education sector* Guidance (Second edition) HSE Books 1994 ISBN 0 7176 0723 2

*Health and safety guidance for school governors and members of school boards* Guidance (Second edition) HSE Books 1998 ISBN 0 7176 1298 8

*Safety representatives and safety committees* L87 (Third edition) HSE Books 1996 ISBN 0 7176 1220 1

*University health and safety management. Code of best practice* Universities and Colleges Employers Association 2001 ISBN 0 9532431 3 3

*Managing health and safety aspects of research in higher and further education* Guidance HSE Books 2000 ISBN 0 7176 1300 3

*Health and safety responsibilities and powers* Ref DfES/803/2001 Department for Education and Skills 2001

## Helplines

HSE Infoline Tel: 0845 345 0055  
Textphone: 0845 408 9577  
(8.30 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday)  
e-mail: [hse.infoline@natbrit.com](mailto:hse.infoline@natbrit.com)

NHS Direct Tel: 0845 4647 [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

Disability Rights Commission Tel: 08457 622 633

ENQUIRE (National advice and information service for additional support for learning in Scotland)  
Tel: 0845 123 2303 [www.enquire.org.uk](http://www.enquire.org.uk)

### **Support groups**

*BackCare* The Charity for Healthier Backs, 16 Elmtree Road, Teddington TW11 8ST Tel: 020 8977 5474

### **Useful websites**

Health and Safety Executive: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

MSD Priority Programme: [www.hse.gov.uk/msd](http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd)

General Teaching Requirement and links to the National Curriculum in England:  
[www.hse.gov.uk/education/qca.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/education/qca.htm)

Department for Education and Skills:  
[www.dfes.gov.uk/index.htm](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/index.htm)

Disability Rights Commission: [www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org)

Scottish Executive: [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

BackCare: [www.backpain.org.uk](http://www.backpain.org.uk)

Chartered Society of Physiotherapists: [www.csp.org.uk](http://www.csp.org.uk)

College of Occupational Therapists: [www.cot.co.uk](http://www.cot.co.uk)

General Osteopathic Council: [www.osteopathy.org.uk](http://www.osteopathy.org.uk)

British Chiropractic Association: [www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk](http://www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk)

### **Acknowledgements**

Disability Rights Commission

General Synod of the Church of England and Diocesan Resource Centre for Education - Church in Wales

Trades Unions Congress (Association of Teachers and Lecturers)

National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations (NCPTA)

Trades Unions Congress (UNISON)

Association of National Specialist Colleges

National Union of Teachers

Department for Education and Skills

Council for Disabled Children

Scottish Executive

Greenbank Residential School, Cheshire

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This document contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

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[www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/information.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/information.htm)

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