

Asking for an EHC needs assessment

This guide is about asking for an EHC needs assessment as a parent carer. It tells you how to apply and how to fill out the online application on Devon's EHC Hub. It also has tips about what information to include and what to do if the needs assessment is for a young person age 16 to 25.

How do I apply for an EHC needs assessment?

As a parent, carer or guardian, you can apply for an EHC needs assessment for your child or young person. Your child's nursery, school or college can also apply, but you don't both need to do it. You don't need to ask for the school's permission or agreement if you want to apply, but it does help to work together with your child's school or college if you can.

You can apply for an EHC needs assessment by:

- Going to the EHC Hub and apply using an online form. The EHC Hub is where all requests in Devon are managed online.
- Writing directly to the SEN 0-25 team at Room L102, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, EX2 4QD telling them you would like your child to be assessed.
- Emailing the SEN 0-25 team with your request to: specialeducation0-25-mailbox@devon.gov.uk

If you send a letter or email, make a copy before you send it, so you've got a record.

Do I have to use the EHC Hub?

It's a good idea to use the EHC Hub if you can, but you don't have to. The EHC Hub is the central place online where the whole needs assessment process is managed. By using it you will be able to see exactly what's going on and

what information has been provided by everyone involved in the assessment. You'll also be able to see when key parts of the process should be finished.

If you're not comfortable using it or you don't have a computer or device, you don't have to apply through the EHC Hub. You can write a letter or an email instead, but you must ask for a needs assessment in writing rather than by phone. If you'd like help to use the EHC Hub, there is support available by phone and email. The details are on the Devon Local Offer website.

If you're not able to use the EHC Hub, you can:

- Ask a friend or family member to complete the application with you or for you.
- Ask a friend or family member to write a letter or email for you, asking for a needs assessment. If they can write down why you think your child needs an assessment too, that will help. There is a template letter you can use on the IPSEA website.
- Contact us to ask for help to make the request.



Many of the professionals involved with your child are likely to be using the EHC Hub to share information during the assessment. If you're not using the EHC Hub, this will be noted on the system and the SEN 0-25 staff member will share all the information with you by email or post instead.

How do I apply using the EHC Hub?

Before you start applying, it's a good idea to collect all the information you'll need. You can't save the page and come back to it later, so it's a good idea to make sure the request is complete before you send it. If you miss anything at this stage don't worry, you can also add information later when the assessment process starts.



Important to know

You will probably find it easier to use the EHC Hub on a laptop, tablet or desktop computer, rather than a phone. The size of the phone screen makes it harder to read the information and there is a chance you might miss something. If you don't have any other device apart from a phone, ask a friend or family member if they have one you can use. Some parents have also said the EHC Hub works better when they use Chrome as their internet browser.

Step one: Asking for an assessment

If you search for Devon EHC Hub, you'll probably end up at a page that has this box on it. At the very bottom of this green box you'll see the words 'Request a Needs Assessment'. Hover over that with your cursor and you'll see it's a link. Click on it.

Step two: Information about EHC plans and assessments

After you've clicked on the link, you'll see information about EHC plans and what they are. Read it and click the button at the bottom that says, 'Request an EHC needs assessment'. That takes you to a second page of information about asking for an assessment. Read that and click the button at the bottom that says, 'Request an EHC needs assessment'.

Step three: Filling out the request form

This is one long form, but there are separate sections in this order.

Giving consent and agreeing to information sharing

The next page has information about consent and information sharing. You'll be asked to choose an option – select the one that says you're a parent applying, rather than an advocate or a young person.

Read the information about consent and how information is shared.

You can write down the details of any individual or organisation that you don't want information shared with and why. Tick the box to say you agree for information to be shared.

Giving information

The next stage of the application is where you give information about you, your child and their needs.

There are five sections for you to fill in. The boxes will get bigger as you type.

1. Details of the person asking for the assessment (you!)

When you answer the question 'Has the request come from the young person?' by clicking the 'No' button, you'll be asked to give your details.

Give contacts that are easy to reach you on, such as your mobile phone number. Don't give email or post addresses you don't use very often or an address where other people might see information without your permission. The information you give and get during the assessment is private (confidential).

2. Your child or young person's details.

Fill this out as best you can. If you don't know things like your child's NHS number, leave it blank.

3. Details of the family members and professionals involved with your child.

This is where you can add in your child's other parent or other family members who you want to be involved with the needs assessment. You can add as many of these as you need to, using the 'add contact' button.

The professionals you add can be people who have treated, supported or assessed your child recently, such as:

- Educational psychologist.
- Speech and language therapist, occupational therapist or physiotherapist.
- Specialist teacher.
- Specialist children's doctor (paediatrician).
- Mental health nurses or doctors.
- Social worker.

If you can, include:

- the professional's name
- what their role is and the organisation they work for (such as paediatrician, Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Trust)
- their contact telephone number and email address

4. Information about where your child currently goes to school

Fill this in even if your child is in a school outside Devon. The word setting means school/nursery or college. Type the name of the school etc into the box called 'Search for a setting within the area'. As you type the school should appear and you can click on it.

If your child isn't in school, you can type in 'elective home education' or 'not in education' and choose one of those options.

You'll also be asked for information about your child's percentage of attendance. You can ask the school to tell you this. Or, it may be on any app your child's school uses for payments and bookings, such as School Gateway. If you don't have this information don't worry; you can just leave that box blank.

5. Important information about your child.

You'll be asked about your child's education, health and care needs as you see them.

Then you'll be asked to say whether you and your child have been involved in the decision to ask for a needs

assessment. If you choose 'yes', you'll be asked what your child thinks about school and learning and there is a section for your views too. If you choose 'no', you'll be asked why your child hasn't been involved.

Try and make the information you give brief and to the point. If you can't answer some of the questions, don't worry. Do what you can to answer as much as you can. The SEN 0-25 team will contact your child's nursery, school or college for information too.

When you've filled in the form and you're happy with it, click the button at the bottom of the screen that says, 'Send request'. Once you've done that, the request will be submitted.

Check your spam or junk folder if you haven't received and email within a day or two. Then add the Hub email address to your 'safe sender' list.



There are some tips on the next few pages to help you fill these sections in.

You'll have another chance to send in your views, and your child's, once the assessment starts. You'll be asked a different set of questions then.

Tips for completing the online form

Important information about the child or young person

First, you'll be asked 'What historical information about the child or young person's **Special Educational Needs (SEN)**, **health needs** and **social care needs** are relevant to this request.'

This is the place where you start to 'paint a picture' of what your child is like and what their needs are. You're asked to give 'historical information' so that means what's happened up until now. You can include information about:

- any diagnosis or assessments by professionals and what these showed
- your child's strengths and what they're good at

- the main difficulties in school and how your child's difficulties show in day to day life
- any health issues which affect how your child learns
- any care issues, such as difficulties with looking after themselves or being independent

When you're answering these questions, it can sometimes help to think about the four main areas of special educational need (see below) and how your child is affected. Your child may have difficulties in one area, in a few areas or in all of them. Stick to the main points – you can add more information at a later stage. Bear in mind though that the information you give here will be part of the evidence used to decide whether your child needs an assessment.

Cognition and learning

This is about how your child learns and how they think. Some learning difficulties may be obvious, whereas others aren't. You could include:

- how they find reading, writing, literacy and maths
- any specific difficulties such as dyslexia or issues learning new skills
- strengths or difficulties with memory, organisation or planning
- any reduced ability to learn because they have difficulty managing their emotions

Communication and interaction

This is how your child communicates with others, their relationships and social skills, including:

- speech and language difficulties
- difficulty communicating with others, such as not being able to say what they want to, or having difficulties understanding what's being said to them
- not understanding or using social rules or how relationships with other people work
- what their relationships are like, with you, your family and friends

Sensory and physical

These are physical and sensory things (over/under sensitive senses such as hearing) that could make it more difficult for your child to learn in a usual school environment. This might include:

- difficulties with hearing or sight or multisensory impairment, sensory triggers or difficulties
- any physical disability
- problems with fine motor skills, such as picking something up between thumb and fingers and using

it, or gross motor skills such as running and jumping.

Social, emotional and mental health

These kinds of difficulties can show in lots of ways, such as a withdrawn or isolated child, or challenging and disruptive behaviour. You could include things like:

- social anxiety, phobias or refusing school
- mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, self-harming or an eating disorder
- attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD)
- attachment disorder or difficulties
- self-esteem and confidence issues
- if they have tantrums or meltdowns or times when they seem to 'lose it'

Your child or young person's views, wishes and feelings

If you answered 'yes' to the question 'has your child been involved in deciding to apply for an assessment', you will see questions about your child or young person's views:

1. What is working well for you in your current education setting?
2. What is not working well for you in your current education setting?
3. What do you think might help?

This is where you put information about what your child thinks about school or college, what they think they're good at and what they would like help with. Some children include their ambitions for the future here too.

At this stage in the needs assessment process, you won't need to go into too much detail. However, later you'll be asked to share more information about your child's feelings and wishes. The questions asked at the next stage are different and they allow you to give your views in a different way. Then, you'll be able to add pictures, drawings, films and audio recordings as well as text. For now, you can only write down your child's views.

Your views, wishes and feelings

There are three questions asked about your views

1. What is working well for the child or young person in their current education setting?
2. What is not working well for the child or young person in their current education setting?
3. What do you think might help?

Here you can talk about your child's strengths, skills and talents. It's a good idea to include your hopes, dreams and aspirations for your child too. Then talk generally about your child's difficulties as you see them and what you think might help them.

At this stage, you won't need to go into too much detail. However, later you'll be asked to share more information about your feelings and wishes. The questions asked at the next stage are different and they allow you to give your views in a different way. There is lots of information and ideas on our website about how to share your views.

Do I need to send any other information?

When you apply using the EHC Hub you won't need to send in any extra information at that stage. Copies of assessments, reports and letters etc can be added later, once the application has been processed and you have accepted the invitation to join the Hub.

If you have asked for an EHC needs assessment by sending a letter or email, you can send any written reports, assessments and other important information from professionals then. These should ideally have been written within the last year. Don't send the original reports as they may not be sent back to you.

You can send in letters or reports from more than a year ago if they have information in them about a diagnosis. This could be something like an autism assessment and diagnosis, or a letter from your child's doctor which says they have ADHD.

Who applies for an EHC needs assessment if my child is over 16?

If your young person is aged between 16 and 25, they can ask for an EHC needs assessment themselves.

The process is the same for young people as it is for parents, and they can use the EHC Hub or send a letter or email to make the request.

They can do that themselves or with help from you or another trusted adult. The SEN 0-25 team will get in touch directly with any young person who has asked for an EHC needs assessment and send the invitation to register for the Hub and all emails to them. If they need to, SEN 0-25 team staff will also speak directly to your young person about the assessment.

As their parent or carer, you can also be invited to register for the Hub and take part in the assessment too. Your young person should add your details to the section called 'Child or young person's main contacts (family and involved professionals)'. If they don't add you then you won't automatically be invited to take part or register for the Hub.

If your young person is between 16 and 25 but is unable to apply for a needs assessment themselves, you can do it on their behalf. This would usually happen if your young person is unable to make informed decisions about their education and future. This is mental capacity – their ability to make a specific decision at a specific point in time.

Most of the time it's a young person's parent or carer that decides whether they're able to make decisions. If you're not sure whether your young person can make decisions about a needs assessment, get advice from your child's GP. You can find out more about mental capacity on the Preparing for Adulthood website.



What happens after I've asked for an assessment?

When you've sent in your request it will be processed by the SEN 0-25 team. You'll be sent an email asking you to register on the Hub. That means setting up your login details including a password. You'll get information about how to do this along with the email.

Once you have registered on the Hub, you'll be able to go in and have a look at all the information and check how things are going as often as you need to. You will also automatically be sent emails at certain key times in the process, such as when a decision is made or when a draft EHC plan is issued.

It's a good idea to get used to the EHC Hub by visiting it every now and again and having a good look around. You can't break it!

You can find out more about the needs assessment process in our leaflet EHC needs assessment: A Guide for parents and carers.

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Need more information?

Devon EHC Hub

www.ehchub-devon.openobjects.com

Devon SEND Local Offer

Information about EHC needs assessment
www.new.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/special-educational-needs-and-disability-send-local-offer

SEND Code of Practice

National guidance on SEND and the law
www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-guide-for-parents-and-carers

Preparing for Adulthood

Information about mental capacity and young people
www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk

Independent Provider of Special Education Advice (IPSEA)

Template letter for EHC needs assessment requests.
www.ipsea.org.uk/model-letters