

An EHC plan is a legal document and it should describe your child and their needs fully and clearly. It's important to check the draft plan, or get help to check it, as it's a key document about your child's support in the future.

You have 15 days to read the draft plan and give your comments, or to accept the plan as it is. The 15 days starts from the day when the draft plan was added to the EHC Hub and you were sent your email about it. Sometimes these emails go into spam or junk mail folders, so check these regularly. The deadline for your comments is written at the bottom of the page where your draft plan is.

If you need more time to look at and comment on the plan, for example, if you've been away or you want to talk to other people about it, you can ask for more time. Contact your caseworker to ask – their name and email address are on the left-hand column of the EHC Hub pages. If you don't make any comments about the draft plan, the needs, outcomes and support in the draft plan will become the final as they are.

What's the point of checking the plan?

An EHC plan is one of the tools that's going to help your child make progress and achieve their best across all areas of their learning. As they get older it's also going to help them become as independent as possible and prepare them for life as an adult. It's important that when the plan is first issued it is accurate and clear.

Think about whether what's in the plan accurately describes your child or young person as they are now. As it's a long term plan, the

EHC plan may not need to be extremely detailed. There is detailed information in the reports and recommendations used to support the needs, outcomes and support in the plan, such as an Educational psychology report.

EHC plans should be supported by the plans made by schools and colleges, which set out how support works day to day. These school plans should also have short term targets for the support for your child. These are sometimes called an Individual Education Plan (IEP), My plan or SEN plan.

Your role is to help your child stay at the heart of the EHC plan, so that their views and goals are central to it. You'll also play a part in making sure their needs are met, and they make progress in the areas that are important for them. To do this you need to think long-term about what they're going to need in terms of skills, experiences and knowledge. As they get older, you'll need to work with them to do this. The law is very clear that EHC plans should be forward-looking documents that support children and young people to aim high and achieve their ambitions.

What do I do now?

The time you have to check the draft plan will go by quickly. Depending on how complex your child's needs are, you may need a few hours to check it and make comments. Many parents find it easiest to do this in more than one go - half an hour or an hour at a time.

The step by step checklist below is one way to check the plan. If you want more detail about the law or other ideas, IPSEA (Independent

Providers of Special Education Advice) has a checklist that you can use which gives more detail about what should be in the plan. Their website is www.ipsea.org.uk.

What parts am I checking?

Check every part of the plan. This is what each part is and the kind of information it includes:

- **Section A: All About Me and My Parent/Carers' Views**

This is information that came from you and your child. If you added your views and your child's to the EHC Hub, then this section should be exactly what you wrote. If you sent your views in on paper or before you started using the EHC Hub, check to make sure the information is here. If your views, or your child's, have changed a lot since you started the assessment process, update them.
- **Sections B, E and F: Special Educational Needs, Outcomes and Provisions**

This is the education part of the plan. It's split into the four main SEN categories - Cognition and Learning, Communication and Interaction, Social, Emotional and Mental Health and Sensory and/or Physical Needs. Each of these is split into strengths, needs, outcomes and provision (support). Click on the arrows beside each to see all the information.
- **Sections C, E and G: Health Needs, Outcomes and Provisions**

This is the part of the plan about health needs which affect your child's education. If your child doesn't have health needs this part will be blank.
- **Sections D, E, H1 and H2: Social Care Needs, Outcomes & Provisions**

This is the part about social care needs which affect your child's education. If your child doesn't have social care needs this part will be blank.
- **Section I: Education Setting**

This is where your child's nursery, school, college or other education setting is listed on the final plan. On the draft plan this part is blank.

- **Section J: Personal Budget**

If you asked for a personal budget, this is where the information about it is written. If you didn't ask for a personal budget this part will be blank.
- **Section K: Information & Advice**

This is the list of the reports given by professionals.



Important to know

The draft plan isn't the final version yet.

You, or the young person the plan is about (if they're over 16), get a copy of the draft plan to comment on. Your child's school or college, and any other school you're asking to be considered, should get a copy too. This is so that schools can see whether they can meet your child's needs.

The SEND Statutory team may reword advice from specialists, to make it clearer for example, but their main role is to co-ordinate things. They will only include needs, outcomes and support recommended by professionals involved in the EHC Needs Assessment.

There are two main things for you to do:

1. **Check the draft plan** to see if it's accurate about your child's needs, their support and what the outcome of that should be. If you don't think it's clear, you can suggest changes or ask for missing information to be added.
2. **Say which school**, college or other educational setting you would like your child to go to.

Once you have read and thought about the draft plan, you have two options:

- If you think the plan is good, you can accept it as it is, without making any changes **or**
- You can ask for changes to be made before a final plan is issued. If you're not happy with the draft plan, you don't have to agree with it.

Checking the plan step by step



Before you read the plan

What to do

Take some time to think about and write down:

- what really matters to and for your child
- what stops them from achieving
- what your hopes are for them in the future

Make a list of the most important support they already get and the support you think they need.

Think about what you want them to achieve over the next few years. Bear in mind that one of the main things you and school need to do is to help them develop as much independence as they can as they grow up. The things that they (and you) want to achieve should help to shape the outcomes written in the EHC plan.

Why you're doing it

You know your child better than anyone. Making a list of what's most important for them will give you a good place to start when you're checking the plan. What's on your list should be in the plan somewhere.

One of the main aims of your child's EHC plan is making sure that the support they're given will help them achieve the best possible results in their journey towards adulthood. The support in a plan should challenge your child to become as independent as possible. This means taking regular steps towards developing the skills they'll need for adult life.

Remember that your child's EHCP is a long-term plan and it will be supported by a short-term school or college plan that will show the smaller steps on the journey towards growing independence.

Step One: Get familiar with the plan

What to do

Once you're logged in to the EHC Hub, from the menu at the top of the screen, click on the Plan button. That will take you to the draft plan. There is an option on that page to download the plan.



Read the draft plan all the way through once. If you can, do this on a big screen – on a personal computer or large tablet or download a PDF copy to read on screen or print.

Think about what you would expect to see in the plan and look for the things that matter most. Are they there?

Why you're doing it

This helps you to get a general feel about whether the plan includes all your child's needs and gives a clear picture of the day to day support they need in class.

It's harder to make comments on the Hub if you're using a smart phone. Using a larger screen or a printed copy will make it easier for you. You can ask your caseworker to send you a copy by post or e-mail and you can mark the copy in pen or post it notes and send it back. You can also scan documents on a smart phone with some apps and upload them, though it's best not to use photos. There is more information about the apps you can use on the Devon County Council website. You can find the link at the end of the factsheet.

Step two: Get familiar with the professional reports

What to do

Read all the professional advice that has been added to EHC Hub as part of the assessment.

You can find this in two places.



Click on the 'Assessment' button at the top of the screen. When you're on the assessment page, scroll down the page until you see a list called 'Requests for advice'. Clicking on any of the 'Response received' links will show you the advice given by that person.

Or

Click on the 'Request' button at the top of the screen. When you're on the Request page, scroll down to the bottom to section 'supporting documents'. These are the reports that were added at the start of the assessment by the school or college.



Sometimes the requests for advice from professionals haven't been responded to or they're no longer involved. If you don't think this information is right you can ask your caseworker to follow this up.

You might find it helpful to download the PDFs of the professional reports. Rename the PDFs so that they make sense to you and save them on your computer or tablet.

Why you're doing it

Reading all the reports and advice helps to show you what should be in the draft plan.

Even if you've read them before this will help to get them fresh in your mind.

You should be able to see clearly if anything major, such as advice from a specific professional, is missing.

Some parents find it helpful to print the reports and advice to refer to when checking the detail in the plan.

Downloading the reports as PDFs will make it easier for you to see both the report and the plan on screen at the same time. Renaming the PDFs of the reports makes it easier for you to find what you need quickly.

Step three: Work out what should be in the plan

What to do

Go through each of the professional reports and separate out the needs, outcomes and support (provision) that they have recommended. The needs and support are usually easy to find, but sometimes professionals don't include outcomes in their reports.

If you've printed the reports, you could use different colour highlighter pens to separately colour code these.

If you're reading the reports on screen, write down each of the needs, outcomes and support as you're going along.

Why you're doing it

The information in the draft EHC plan is made up almost entirely of what is written in the reports from professionals. So, the main things from those reports should be in the draft plan.

An EHC plan contains information about your child's needs and the support (provision) they should get to meet those needs. It should also include an outcome for each need - which is like a target that says what difference the support will make.

Checking the plan this way helps you to be sure that each of your child's needs is included in the plan, alongside the relevant support and outcomes.

Step four: Find out if anything is missing

What to do

Crosscheck what is in the draft plan with what is in each professional report. So, look at the needs, outcomes and support you have found in the professional reports and check that it is included in the plan. You're looking to see if anything is missing.

Do this in a careful way so you don't miss anything. You can either

- go through each professional report and tick off everything that's in the plan and make a list of what is missing or not clear enough or

- go through the plan section by section and check each professional report, ticking off everything that's in the reports and make a list of what is missing or not clear enough

Sometimes your caseworker will reorder or reorganise advice from professional's reports so that it doesn't repeat itself across the categories. It's worth looking to see if the advice in the report is somewhere else in the EHC plan instead.

Why you're doing it

This is the part of checking the plan that is likely to take you longest, so give yourself plenty of time.

It can be easy to get lost among all the paperwork and to lose the thread of what you're aiming to do, so be as orderly as you can be. If you're not the most organised person, ask someone to help you with this bit. One of you can read out the needs, outcomes and support and the other can check the plan.

By ticking off everything that's made it into the plan you can see whether anything is missing. If you do find things that are missing, you can put them in the comments boxes on the Hub and ask for them to be included in the final plan. See step six for more information about commenting.

Step Five: Check the detail and how specific it is

What to do

Now that you've worked out what should be in the plan, you also need to check that there's enough detail in it. What's written in the plan should be clear and straightforward.

Make a note of anything in the plan that is unclear or anything you don't understand.

When you're reading the plan, ask yourself, what does this actually mean? Is it clear what my child is going to get, and if it's not, then it's not specific enough!

The EHC Hub has boxes where support is specified – i.e. how often, for how long, who with etc. Check that these

have either been filled out for each type of support, or that this detail is somewhere in the main part of the plan.

A need only needs to go in once. So, for example, several professionals might list a need such as anxiety. But it only needs to appear once in the plan, alongside the support recommended by each of the different professionals.

Check to make sure that the key support and the wording used to describe it is correctly written in the plan. So, for example, the level of support given in class, the ratio of staff to children, any group size for learning and the level of supervision needed to keep your child safe.

Why you're doing it

The SEND Code of Practice says that "EHC plans should be clear, concise, understandable and accessible to parents, children, young people, providers and practitioners."

You should know from the plan exactly what support your child will get and how often, who is going to give the support and what skills qualifications or training they staff should have. The plan should also be clear about how often the support should be reviewed to see what progress is being made.

It's important to get the details right, to make sure the support is given in the right way at school or college. However, try not to get too bogged down in the smallest detail and making sure absolutely everything is in it. It's often important to find the right balance between making sure the plan is clear about key support, while giving some flexibility to staff and your child day to day.

Step six: Make your comments

What to do

This is where you bring all your work together to make any comments you have. There is a box at the start of each section where you can type in your comments.

Comments

Save

You can comment on needs, outcomes and provision for each of the four areas of SEND, and for health and social care if they're part of your child's plan.

You might find it easiest to do one SEND area at a time. You can make a note of all the comments you have about cognition and learning for example and add these to the comment boxes for that section. When you've finished each section click the 'save changes' button. You can go back and add more comments later if you need to.

Don't press the button that says 'Finish Commenting' at this stage, as that will send the plan to the SEND Statutory team before you've finished!

If you're asking for information that's missing to be included, it helps if you can be clear about what report that information comes from. So, for example, page 11 educational psychologists report or page 2 of therapists report.

Why you're doing it

When they get your comments, the SEND Statutory team will consider them and based on what you've said, they may make changes to the draft plan.

They may then issue another draft version for you to look at, or more likely issue a final plan. This may or may not have the changes you asked for in it.

Step seven: Name the Education Setting

What to do

Section I of the draft EHC plan should be blank when you get it. This is where you say which school or college you would like your child to go to. You can ask for the school or college that your child already attends to be named, or somewhere different. You might hear this called parental preference. As a parent, you have a legal right for your child to have their education at a school you choose. You can find out more about that on the IPSEA website.

What is a school 'consult' or consultation for?

If you have asked for your child to go to a particular setting (nursery, school or college etc), the SEND Statutory team must ask them whether they can meet your child's needs. You might hear that called a 'consult'.

The local authority usually do that by sending the EHC plan to the headteacher at the setting you have asked for. They may also send the plan to other settings, which they think may be able to meet your child's needs. For example, if you have asked for a special school for your child, the local authority may consult with a mainstream school or schools as well. Those settings may be in Devon or, if appropriate, in another local authority.

If you are asking for an independent school, the situation may be different and it's a good idea to get advice about it. IPSEA also have information about choosing a school if you have an EHC plan.

The setting usually has 15 days to respond. Any setting could say that they can or cannot meet a child's needs, based on the information that's in the EHC plan. The LA should think carefully about what the school have said before they decide to name it in a child's plan.

After the consult, the local authority will name a school and if it is not the one you have asked for you can challenge the decision if you disagree with it. If you don't ask for a specific school the local authority will choose for you.

Why you're doing this

You have the right to ask for a particular school for your child, including any mainstream or special school. You can also ask for an independent school or an independent special school. If you're in this situation, it's a good idea to get specific advice about it. You can contact us to speak to one of our enquiry line team.

Step eight: Send in all your comments

What to do

When you've added all your comments for each section and chosen the nursery school or college you want your child to go to, click the button that says, 'Finish commenting'.



Your caseworker will be sent a message to say you've finished making your comments. If you forget to add something, e-mail your caseworker with your comments before the deadline.

Why you're doing it

All your comments and your choice of nursery, school or college will be sent to the SEND Statutory team after you've clicked the 'finish commenting' button. They will consider everything you've sent.

If the final plan is issued and you disagree with either the school or college that's named, or with any of the needs or support then you have the right of appeal. This means you can ask for mediation or challenge the local authority's decision at a tribunal. You can find out more about this on the DiAS website and by contacting us.

Council for Disabled Children

EHC plans – examples of good practice
councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/

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Need more information?

SEND Code of Practice

Legal guidance around special educational needs
www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25

Devon SEND Local Offer: What happens after a request is made

www.devon.gov.uk/education-and-families/send-local-offer/education-health-and-care-plans/what-happens-after-a-request-is-received/