

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.

There is a step-by-step outline of the EHC needs assessment process and links to useful information on the Devon Local Offer website. Details are at the end of this factsheet.

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 these ways.

- Go to the EHC Hub and apply using an online form. The EHC Hub is where all requests in Devon are managed online.
- Write directly to the SEND Statutory team at Room L102, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, EX2 4QD telling them you would like your child to be assessed.
- Email specialeducation@devon.gov.uk
- Phone [01392 380434](tel:01392380434) (option 1).

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 may be helpful to use the EHC Hub as it is the central place online where the whole needs assessment process is managed. By using it you will be able to see 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 phone or write a letter or an email instead, but you should ask for a needs assessment in writing rather than by phone if possible. This is so you have a record of the date you applied. If you need help with technical issues using the EHC Hub, you can contact their support team by phone and email. The details are at the end of this factsheet.

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. Details are at the end of the factsheet.
- 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 SEND Statutory team member will share the key 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. It may also be worth having the information in a word or similar document so you can just copy and paste it and have a record of what you sent. 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 can make it hard to read information and there is a chance you might miss something. If you only have a phone, ask a friend or family member if they have a different device 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 this page. At the bottom on the right, you'll see the words 'Request 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 blue button 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. Click on the downward arrow next to each part to see

the bit you need to read or fill out. Remember that you cannot save a copy and go back to the form. So, have a written back-up record.

Giving consent and agreeing to information sharing

The first section 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 person or organisation that you do not want information shared with and why. You have to tick the box to say you agree for information to be shared before you can go any further.

Giving information

The next stage is where you give information about yourself, your child and their needs. There are five sections 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 then be asked to give your details.

Give contacts that are easy to reach you on, such as your mobile phone number. Do not 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).

You'll be asked whether this is the first request you've made for your child or young person. If it's not, and you've made a request before, you'll be asked for the date of that request.

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 or UPN, leave it blank.

3. **Child or young person's main contacts (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' button.

Add professionals 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 Hospital)
- 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.

The next questions ask you to say whether the school is primary, secondary or neither, whether your child goes there part-time or full time and whether the school or college is residential.

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. If there is anything else you want to say about the setting where your child is being educated, there is a box where you can put additional information.

5. **Important information about your child**

You'll be asked about your child's education, health and care needs as you see them. There is information about how to fill in this section on next page.

6. **Views of the child or young person, and their parent carer or guardian**

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 you and your child think about school and learning. If you choose 'no' for your child, you'll be asked why they haven't been involved. You will also be asked for your views.

Try and make the information you give on the form 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 SEND Statutory team will contact your child's nursery, school or college for information too.

Sending the form

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.



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

This is split on the form into 3 separate questions You'll be asked 'What information about the child or young person's **Special Educational Needs (SEN)**, **health needs** and **social care needs** is relevant. Do not worry too much about whether something should go into the box about health or social care needs, or whether it should go into the education needs box. At this stage it's important to get the main needs down in some form.

This is the place where you start to 'paint a picture' of what your child is like and what their needs are. 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

Stick to the main points – you can add more information at a later stage.

Education needs

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.

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'

Social care needs

Saying how independent your child is, and what day-to-day activities they need help with can be useful to put in the section about social care needs. You could include things like:

- self-care skills such as washing and dressing
- social skills, friendships and interacting with others
- safety issues such as taking risks or being unsafe when out and about
- for young people, whether they have skills to live on their own or with some support and the skills to work or volunteer

Health needs

Include any health issue that could affect your child's learning and their ability to be in school. This could include things like:

- long term health problems like asthma or epilepsy especially if your child's going to need regular hospital care and appointments or time off school
- sleep difficulties that could affect energy levels and how well they can concentrate
- any health issues that need regular treatment or support during the day, such as medication or feeds or help with going to the toilet or personal hygiene

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 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. Do not 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 SEND Statutory 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, SEND Statutory 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 they are 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 your request it will be processed by the SEND Statutory 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.

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

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.

If the needs assessment goes ahead, you will 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.

Need more information?



DIAS information that may be helpful.

These resources are on our website or available as a document by contacting us.

- EHC needs assessment: A booklet for parents and carers plus a factsheet
- EHC plans factsheet and web page
- Parent carer, child and young person views webpages

Devon EHC Hub

www.ehchub-devon.openobjects.com

EHC Hub support team

01392 380434 (Option 2)

educationsystems@devon.gov.uk

Devon SEND Local Offer

Information about EHC needs assessment

www.devon.gov.uk/education-and-families/send-local-offer/education-health-and-care-plans/

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

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