DiAS
Devon Information
Advice and Support
for Special Educational Needs and Disability

A guide
for parents
and carers

Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support in School

- What is SEN support?
- How is SEN support planned and given?
- How can I get specialist help and assessment?
- What are reasonable adjustments?

Contents

This booklet is about Special educational needs (SEN) support in schools and it's for anyone who has a child with special educational needs or a disability (SEND). It can help you to understand what good support in school looks like and how support is planned and given. You'll learn how school plans are written, reviewed and changed as your child gets older. There is also information about what to do if you think your child needs specialist help and assessment.

What is SEN Support?

All children with special educational needs should get support to help them manage in school and make progress. This is called **SEN Support**. You'll probably hear and see the word 'provision' used a lot too. That's another word for support.

SEN support is the core support that all children and young people with SEND get, whether they have an EHC plan or not. If your child does have an EHC plan, then they will have core SEN support as well as the specialised extra support that's listed in their plan.

SEN support in nurseries, schools and colleges is based around the specific needs of each child or young person. It's support that your child gets that is different from, or extra to, what other children their age normally get.

The main things to know about SEN support

These are the main things to know about SEN support for your child.

- Because every child is different, and has different needs, the support your child gets may be quite different from what another child gets. So, two children of the same age with autism, for example, may have very different support.
- Schools may arrange the support in different ways too. So, it may not look the same in every school, but staff should be able to tell you why they're doing what they're doing and how it will help.
- It's important for your child or young person to have a say in their support. Look for ways to get them involved and help them to share their views.
- SEN support will change as your child grows and their needs change. What they need when they are six may be very different from what they need at age 11.
- There are four main areas of special educational need: **Communication and Interaction, Cognition and Learning, Physical and Sensory** and **Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)**. Nurseries, schools and colleges can provide support in all these areas. You can find out more about these areas on our website.
- As a parent or carer, you have an important part to play in helping SEN support to work well too. You know your child best and you know what they're good at and what they find difficult. Share your views with the professionals and make sure you stay involved in the decisions that are made.
- SEN support is there to help your child achieve and be the best that they can be. It should be ambitious and have targets that will stretch your child.

- Your child doesn't need to have a diagnosis to get SEN support in school. Support for children in school is needs led, not diagnosis led. That means the needs of the child (not the school) are the most important factor in deciding what support they get, not any diagnosis if there is one.
- SEN support is about getting the amount of support just right. Too much help isn't good in the long run. Children need just the right amount of help to get involved with their learning. They need to see themselves as able to do the work and problem solve.
- Your child's teachers are responsible and accountable for their progress and development. That includes where they have support from teaching assistants or specialist staff.

What does the law say about SEN support?

The SEND Code of Practice is the main legal guidance for organisations that work with and support children and young people with SEND. That includes local authorities, NHS and social care organisations and education providers.

As a core principle it says:

All children and young people are entitled to an appropriate education, one that is appropriate to their needs, promotes high standards and the fulfilment of potential.

This should enable them to:

- achieve their best
- become confident individuals living fulfilling lives, and
- make a successful transition into adulthood, whether into employment, further or higher education or training

The guidance also says....

Every school is required to identify and address the SEN of the pupils that they support. Mainstream schools, including academies, alternative provision, and Pupil Referral Units, must:

- do everything they can to meet a child or young person's special educational needs – this is called using their **'best endeavours'**
- make sure that children, parents and young people are actively involved in decision-making
- make sure that children and young people with SEN can take part in activities at school alongside children who don't have SEN
- tell you if they are giving your child SEN support
- have a teacher who is responsible for co-ordinating SEN support – a SEN co-ordinator, or SENCO/SENDCO
- make sure that all teachers and support staff who work with your child know about their needs, the support that is being given and any teaching strategies or approaches that are needed
- prepare a SEN report – this is a report about how they support and plan for the education of children with SEN or disabilities

What is a SENCO and what do they do?

SENCO stands for Special Educational Needs Coordinator. You can also see it written as SENDCO, which means Special Educational Needs and Disability Coordinator. Each school must have a SENCO. They are trained teachers who have also done a National Award in Special Educational Needs Coordination, or are working towards one.

The SENCO is responsible for making sure that children with SEND get the right support, including those children who have an EHC plan.

They also give advice and support to teachers and work with other professionals. They can arrange assessments, get advice from specialists and work with teachers to decide on the best support for your child. As a parent with a child with SEN, you're likely to have an ongoing relationship with the SENCO at your child's school.

You should meet with them regularly, or with someone from the SEN support staff or a teacher. That should usually be once a term. They are likely to be one of your first points of contact if your child is having difficulties or you think they may need more, or different, support.

Important to know

Getting help early is important for every family, but especially for those who have a child with special educational needs. The longer you sit on a problem or worry, the more difficult and stressful it's likely to get. Without help, challenges will become bigger than they need to be and harder to 'fix'.

Getting help is about having the right conversation, at the right time, with the right people. That almost always starts with you connecting with a professional and having a chat. Often, it's with someone who knows your child well, such as their nursery worker, a teacher or a SENCO. But it could be anyone.

The important thing is that the conversation happens. You should be able to talk about the difficulties your child is having, as well as how that's affecting you and your family.

In Devon, any education, health or care professional should be part of what's called 'Early Help'. This is an approach to making sure families get the support they need at an early stage, before small issues become bigger. You can find out more about Early Help on page 25.

What kind of support is available in school?

The support your child gets will depend on their individual needs. Every child is different and will respond to support in a different way.

The kind of support that's available in school is very broad – from simple things like leaving class five minutes before the end of a lesson to avoid busy corridors; through to movement breaks and social skills groups; and on to more specialised IT support and speech and language therapy.

The approach to support is often a step-by-step one. So, support may start at a quite simple level, to see what works and what doesn't. How your child responds to the support will dictate the next step. If it works well, it will stay in place and carry on. If it works a bit or not at all, then more or different support may be added or tried. It's often a trial-and-error process to get the right fit for your child.

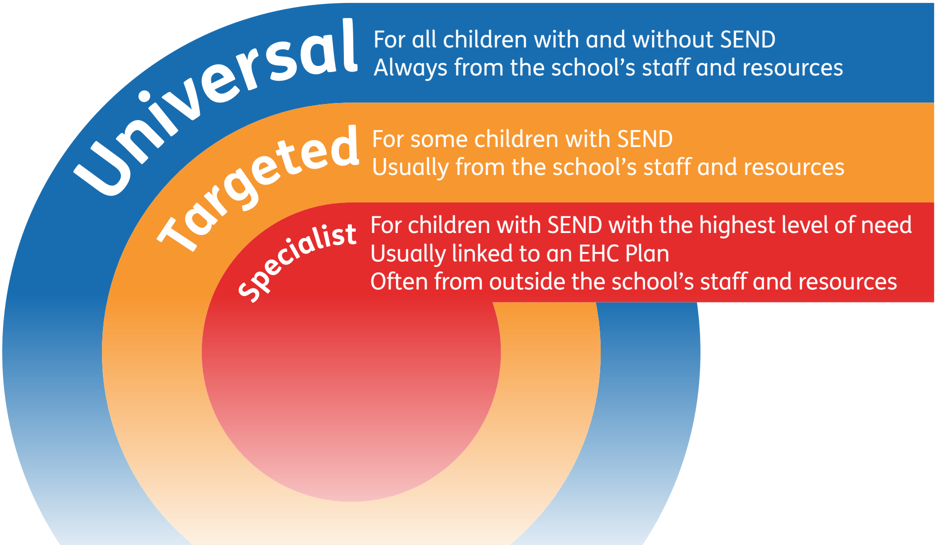
This whole process of assessing, planning, doing and then reviewing support is called the **graduated approach** and it should happen in an ongoing way in every school.

Many schools are flexible and very creative about the support they give individual children. Often SEN support works well when relationships are good – both those between a child or young person and the staff and those between staff and parents. In fact, relationships are often the key, whoever they're with. The right words, at the right times or the right approach when things go wrong can make a huge difference to a child.

Sometimes it's all about mindset. Seeing a child positively, knowing them well and being prepared to be flexible will help. It's worth remembering that lots of support for children with SEND costs little or nothing – such as making sure they sit in the place where they are most comfortable in class or giving them small tasks to do to build their self-esteem. These changes to the way that staff and schools do things are called **reasonable adjustments**. You can find out more about this later in the booklet.

Universal, targeted and specialist support

Schools use three main levels of support – **universal, targeted and specialist**. All children with SEN get universal support and most will get targeted support. Those children and young people with more complex or severe needs will also have specialist support.



For all children with and without SEND
Always from the school's staff and resources

For some children with SEND
Usually from the school's staff and resources

For children with SEND with the highest level of need
Usually linked to an EHC Plan
Often from outside the school's staff and resources

Universal support (provision)

This is support that is given in all schools, in every classroom, by every teacher and **for all children** – those with and without SEN. The funding and the expertise for universal support come from the school's resources and is part of quality first teaching.

Universal support is focused around **differentiated learning**. The level at which your child, and others, are learning may be different to that of other children in their class. So, the teacher will change the work to meet their needs within class. This is differentiation and teachers do this routinely for every lesson.

Universal support also includes things that all children can expect to get, such as visual support and timetables, breaking down work into small chunks and good preparation for change.

Targeted support (provision)

This is support that can be given in all schools, in every classroom and by every teacher, and is **for some children**.

It’s extra to, or different from, universal provision. There is funding and expertise available in schools for children who need targeted support.

A child getting targeted support will have a school-based plan which sets out the support. The staff at school may also need to get professional advice for some areas of support.

Targeted support includes things like use of IT resources to support reading and writing, social skills groups and counselling.

Specialist support (provision)

This is support that’s available in all schools and some classrooms, and is **for a few children**. The funding and expertise may need to come from outside the school’s resources.

If your child needs specialist support, school staff will usually need to get specialist advice. This kind of support is usually given to children and young people with long-term complex needs and/or disabilities, often with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. It’s the type of support often given in special schools, though it’s also given in mainstream schools.

Specialist support includes things like using a picture exchange system for communication, individual mentoring and individual speech or language therapy.

Your role and your child’s role

You and your child have an important part to play in making sure SEN support works in school. Your views, and those of your child, should be an essential part of the decision-making process – working out what your child’s needs are, what support they need and what is working or not working. Here are some tips for ways you can take part in your child’s SEN support.

Go to regular meetings. It’s OK to ask for a meeting if you think you need one and it’s a good idea to get meetings in your diary early on. Before you go, spend time thinking about your child and how they’re getting on. Write down what’s going well and what’s not, plus any ideas you have. We have a meeting form that can help you do that.

Talk to your child about school, and how things are. We have some tools to help you do that.

Share how things are at home. Many families find that their child is very different at home compared to school. That can tell you, and the professionals, a lot about their state of mind and how they are feeling.

Keep good day-to-day communications going with school. If they are starting new support or changing something, it’s helpful to know. Likewise, if things happen at home that could affect your child, make sure you tell staff.

Join in assessments when you’re invited to. Professionals often talk to parents as part of an assessment as it gives a good insight into their strengths and difficulties.

Share your ideas and the strategies you use at home. If something works well at home, then it may work well in school too. This can be anything, such as a soft toy that your child has for comfort or sharing the signs you see when your child is being triggered or starting to struggle. Remember, you’re the expert.

How SEN support is planned and given

The main things to know about how SEN support is planned and given

- Support for all children and young people with SEN is planned and given using something called the **graduated response**. This is a decision-making cycle in four clear stages: assess, plan, do and review. (see page 14)
- Every child or young person with SEND should have a written plan of some kind. Whatever type of plan it is, it's important that it's used, kept up-to-date and reviewed regularly. It should change as your child's needs change.
- The assess, plan, do and review cycle should happen again and again over the months and years. It can, and should, be used from pre-school and nursery through to college and further education.
- What comes out of the assess, plan, do and review cycle and what goes into a school plan is different for each child. That's because they are based on an individual child's needs, and everyone is different.
- Your child doesn't need to have a diagnosis for the graduated response process to start, or for it to carry on being done. Your child doesn't need to have an EHC plan for this to be happening either.
- You should have a copy of the school plan.
- It's important for you to take part in the discussions about your child's life in school and their support. These discussions usually happen during regular meetings. These should happen once a term, though they can be more often.

The Local Offer

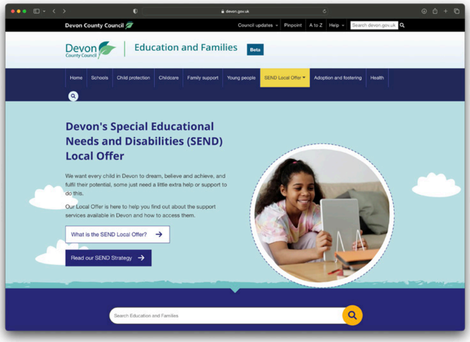
Every local authority in England has a Local Offer. It's usually a website and it sets out information about the support a local authority expects to be available to families of children in their area who have SEN or are disabled.

Devon has a Local Offer website which has information about a wide range of support and services, from community-based family support through to specialist services. It tells you what's out there to support your child and your family and how to access it or be referred to it. It's a good place to start if you need information or if you want to know what's available in your area.

What is the graduated response?

The graduated response is a decision-making cycle in four clear stages: **assess, plan, do and review**. What it means day-to-day is that professionals assess your child, plan what support they will need, give the support and then look at how well it's worked.

Over months and years, the process is done again and again, and each time your child's progress and the support will be reviewed and changed if needed. As time goes on, your child's needs should become clearer and what approach works best for them will start to show. Everyone can then build on the approaches that work.



Devon's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Local Offer

We want every child in Devon to dream, believe and achieve, and fulfil their potential, some just need a little extra help or support to do this.

Our Local Offer is here to help you find out about the support services available in Devon and how to access them.

Assess, Plan, Do and Review cycle
(The Graduated Response)

Working out your child’s needs and specifically what they need help and support with.

Planning the support provided by school staff and other professionals.

Planned support is given in school. Your child will need enough time to adapt and see if it works.

Regularly discussing whether the support is making a difference and if the plan needs to change.

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Assess

This part of the cycle is about working out your child's needs – what they need help with. Your child doesn't need a diagnosis to have their needs assessed. Your child's teacher(s), support staff and the SENCO do this together, working with you and with your child if possible.

They will look at things like:

- the teacher's/teaching assistant's assessment and experience with your child
- your experiences at home and what you think your child's needs are
- your child or young person's views
- any assessments that have been done and advice and recommendations from any specialists from outside school
- your child's progress and how that compares to other children their age

When the staff at your child's school are deciding whether they need more support, or what type of support that might be, they should look at all the evidence they have. That includes the progress your child is making individually and compared to other children their age. As well as putting specific support in place for your child, school staff should also look at anything that's stopping your child learning successfully. These barriers can then be removed wherever possible.

Plan

Once your child's needs have been assessed, the support they need can be planned. You should know what support the staff at school are going to give. That should include any support your child may get from professionals from outside of school, such as enablers or therapists. Plans should be made in partnership with you and with your child, if that's appropriate.

All the teachers and support staff who work with your child should know what the plan for their support is, and what they need to do. This should be written down somewhere on the school's information system and you should be able to see and have a copy of the plan too (see more below).

Do

This part of the graduated response cycle is the doing part, where the support is given day to day and week to week.

Your child's class or subject teacher is responsible for working with them daily to give the support. They are also responsible for any support given outside of class, such as small group work or individual support.

It's a good idea to make sure there is a fixed timescale for the support to be given before it's reviewed. For example, staff might decide to try something for half a term or a term. There needs to be enough time for your child to get used to the support and settle into it. There should also be enough time to see whether it's making any difference. But it shouldn't be so long that you end up wasting lots of time if it isn't working. Many parents and professionals review support together once a term at a meeting.

Review

This is the part of the process where you, the professionals and your child think about whether the support is making a difference. This should happen regularly. These are some of the main things to think about when you're reviewing support:

- Is the support working and how is your child reacting to it?
- If it's making a difference, how much difference?
- Is it happening as it should – so is the right person giving the support, have they had any training they might need, is it happening often enough?

Depending on the answers to these questions, the support should be adjusted if needed. That might mean stopping the support and trying something different, changing things a little or a lot or leaving things as they are.

School plans

SEN support works best when there is a clear and understandable written plan. Everyone who supports a child should be able to see and use it.

The SEND Code of Practice 2015 is the legal guidance for professionals, schools and local authorities to follow.

This is what it says about school plans.

> "Where a pupil is receiving SEN support, schools should talk to parents regularly to set clear outcomes and review progress towards them, discuss the activities and support that will help achieve them, and identify the responsibilities of the parent, the pupil and the school. Schools should meet parents at least three times each year."

The SEND Code of Practice says meetings to talk about support should happen at least three times a year. Many parents meet with the SENCO, or someone from the SEN support staff or a teacher once a term. Sometimes it's useful to meet more often than that. So, if your child has just moved to a new school, if there is lots of change going on or things are especially difficult you might meet more often.

What should be in a school plan?

The foundations of any good plan are your child's aspirations. That means the plan should start with what your child (and you) wants for their future. Once you and the professionals know that, you can work out what their needs are, how they are going to achieve their goals and what support they need.

Your child's plan should explain:

- what their special educational needs are (**needs**)
- what support they need to help them (**provision**)
- the difference that support should make (**outcomes**)

The support they are getting should be written so that it is:

- detailed and specific – you should know what type of support is being given, who will be giving it and what expertise (if any) that person may need in order to give it
- quantified – you should know when the support will be given, how long it will last and how often they will have it

What happens at meetings?

Meetings to review your child's school plan will sometimes take place between you and the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO). Other SEN support staff, such an assistant SENCO, or a pastroal lead could meet with you instead. Other staff may be at the meeting too, such as your child's teacher if they're in primary school, or their form tutor if they're in secondary school. If your child has a teaching assistant who gives a lot of support, it can be helpful for them to be at the meeting too.

Your child or young person can be there too if they're able to and want to. Some children go to meetings just at the start, where they can say what they think about how things are going. Others stay for the whole meeting. You and your child will know what's likely to be best for you.

If they’re not at the meeting or don’t feel able to take part, there are other ways for them to share their views, such as drawing a picture or writing something down – whatever works best for them.

Meetings often take about an hour. They usually follow a pattern and most of the discussion will be about your child’s school plan. That means looking at and discussing each need and the support that’s in place, seeing what’s going well and what isn’t and discussing whether anything needs to change. It can also be a good time to think about your child’s aspirations – what they and you want for their future. You’ll be able to share how things are at home and you’ll hear how things are going at school.

A member of staff should take notes about what is discussed and agreed during the meeting. It’s a good idea for you to do the same if you can.

Some parents use our meeting form, which can help you keep track of what is talked about and what people agree they will do.

After the meeting, the school plan should be updated. Keeping good records is important for school staff. These can show what has been tried, what worked and what difference that made. Ideally you should get a copy of the updated plan and the meeting notes. If that doesn’t happen within a week or so, contact the SENCO and ask for them.

Reasonable adjustments

What are reasonable adjustments?

Reasonable adjustments are the changes that are made to a child's school life, so that they're not at a disadvantage compared to others.

In reality, it's much of the support that is put in place to help your child achieve their best.

The term 'reasonable adjustments' is often used in a quite general way to apply to all children with SEND. But in law, it's specifically about the changes made to support a disabled child. Having said that, the term disability is quite a broad one and many children and young people who have special educational needs have a disability too. You can find out more about this and the law on the page about reasonable adjustments on our website.

Reasonable adjustments come in all kinds of shapes and sizes, depending on a child's needs. They include making changes to things like uniform and behaviour policy to meet the needs of a child, as well as the kind of support offered day-to-day in school.

The main things to know about reasonable adjustments

- Reasonable adjustments are for children with SEND whether they have an EHC plan or not.
- Your child doesn't need to have a diagnosis for reasonable adjustments to be made. Changes made in nursery, school and college should be based on the needs of each individual.
- Making reasonable adjustments is a great way for you, your child and staff to work together to find solutions that really work. Talk to school staff about what works well at home – for example, what comforts your child and helps them to calm down.

- The legal duty to make reasonable adjustments means a school should take positive steps to make sure that disabled pupils can take part fully in education. This means enjoying other benefits, facilities and services that the school provides for their pupils, including school trips.
- Many reasonable adjustments can cost little or nothing, and instead mean a change in practice rather than expensive pieces of equipment or extra staff.
- Making changes to support at school is more likely to work if it's going at a pace your child can manage. Often, going slowly and being successful with one adjustment before moving to the next works best. If things go wrong, it's a smaller step to go back and start again from when it worked.
- A school's duty to make reasonable adjustments is an anticipatory one. Anticipatory means that schools need to think in advance about what a disabled child might need, and what changes may need to be made for them.
- In making decisions about reasonable adjustments, the best place to start is with the child or young person themselves. They are the expert in their own needs (alongside their parents, for many).
- Every child and young person is different and what works for one may not work for another. This might sound obvious, but sometimes when checklists and policies are drawn up and used, this can get lost.
- Though it may not always be practically possible to do what a child or young person feels is right for them, it's important for them to know why it's not possible. This helps them feel listened to and understood, even if they are disappointed with how things turn out.

Starting with your child’s views

For reasonable adjustments to work well, they should be child-led. That means, whenever possible, your child or young person should be involved in helping to decide what support and changes are needed.

We know from what children and young people have told us, that putting into action what has been discussed and agreed is vitally important. Where things aren’t followed through it’s easy for trust to breakdown.

This is what children and young people say:

> “Understand and hear what I am saying – and what I am not saying. Don’t dismiss my views – instead, make them the focus.”

> “Be flexible to meet my needs. Before you say no to something, really think about why something isn’t possible. Just because it hasn’t been done before, doesn’t mean it’s not possible!”

> “Be aware of my sensory needs. Nurseries, schools and colleges are often full of sensory stimuli, such as bright lights, noisy busy corridors, raised voices, lots of colourful work pinned to walls and the smell of the dining hall. Understanding these can often help explain behaviour and triggers.”

> “Agree adjustments with me and my parent or carer – have a good discussion and really listen to what we’re saying.”

Important to know

Schools can, and do, make lots of reasonable adjustments for children and young people. You can find some great examples on our website, on the page about reasonable adjustments.

Getting specialist help and assessment

Usually, school staff take a step-by-step approach to supporting a child with special educational needs. Based on how well the support works, it might be changed or increased over time to meet their needs. Most support comes from within the school's resources and the expertise of the staff. For many children, this level of support works very well, and they won't need any help from outside school.

Sometimes, even though school staff have tried different kinds of support for a while, it doesn't seem to be right or enough. That's when it's a good idea to think about getting more specialised help and advice.

How do I know when my child needs more help?

Specialist advice is often needed if your child has been getting good SEN support in school and:

- they're not making the progress you would expect (there is little or no progress)
- school staff now need expertise from outside of school to better understand the needs of your child
- they're working at a level that's much lower than other children of their age

This is a decision that you will need to be involved in making. Your child's SENCO should talk to you about why they think more help is needed, and what kind of specialist advice they're going to ask for. You can say yes or no.

School staff can ask for specialist help at any point, including when a special educational need is first identified.

Some parents want to give things more time to work. Others can find it hard to come to terms with the level of need and support that their child has. That's completely understandable and if you're finding things difficult, it can help to talk to other parents as well as the teacher or SENCO. Our Ambassador Volunteers can help you connect with other parents in your local area too.

What kind of specialist help is there?

The kind of specialist advice and support your child gets will depend on their needs. It can come from education, health and care professionals and services.

It can be a one-off piece of work or longer-term support.

Specialist advice and help could include:

- a conversation between staff and specialist to get some ideas about support to try
- specialist advice clinic session for teachers and SENCOs
- training for support staff and teachers
- a school visit to observe a child and make suggestions for the type of support that might help
- a full formal assessment and recommendations
- direct support for your child, such as specific therapies or interventions, either in school or outside
- specialist equipment or resources, such as communications technology

Some support is given directly to your child, such as physiotherapy, strategies to manage emotions and speech therapy. Some support is best given in a small group with other children, and some is best done when your child works alongside a supporting adult.

Other support and advice focuses on training or giving skills or support to the staff that help or teach your child.

What is Early Help and an Early Help Assessment?

Early Help is an approach to making sure families get the support they need at an early stage, before small issues become bigger. It puts families in touch with the right professionals who can give the best support at that time.

It should be led by your needs as a family, and it's based on using the strengths that you and your support network already have. It also includes getting support from services, local communities and professionals.

Early Help isn't a service or a team of people. It's an approach to support. Professionals from different services work together with you to come up with a support plan and help you to put it in place.

Early Help Assessment

Getting a plan together to help you and your family often means doing an Early Help Assessment. This is a way of working out what the challenges are and putting a plan in place to support you.

You'll work together with school staff and other professionals to plan the things you want to achieve as a family. The plan should say who will be doing what and by when. It will also include the things you'll be doing.

The plan will be reviewed regularly to see what is working and what might need to change. That's usually done at a regular Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting.

You and the professionals involved are always invited to these meetings. The meetings keep going every few weeks or months until you feel ready to manage on your own. Then the meetings will stop, and the plan will end.

Sometimes things seem to get ‘stuck’. You might have tried different kinds of support for a while and things don’t seem to be getting much better or moving forwards. If that happens, the professional that’s leading on your support can contact your local Early Help Hub and ask for advice. The staff there can advise or ask the professional to make a ‘request for additional services.’ This includes teams such as the Family Intervention and Youth Intervention teams and children’s centres.

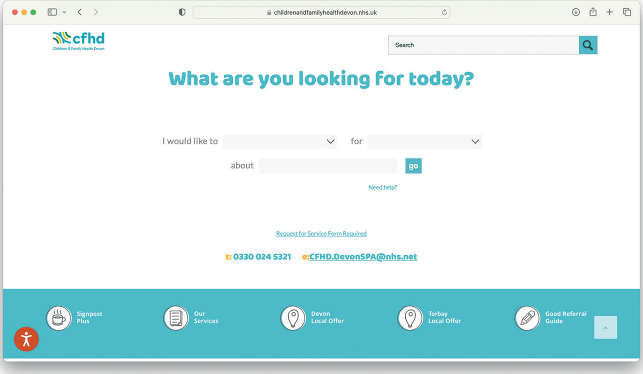
How can a professional get specialist help for my child?

Usually, it's the SENCO at your child's school who will make a referral or ask for specific specialist help. But any professional that works with your child can ask for help. In Devon that's likely to happen in one of three main ways, depending on the type of support that's needed.

1. A direct referral to Children and Family Health Devon (CFHD)

This is the central place for referrals for specialist health services. It also takes referrals for social care assessments, which may lead to support from the Disabled Children's Service. You might sometimes hear it called the SPA, which stands for Single Point of Access.

CFHD has a referral form which your SENCO, or any other professional, can fill out. They will need your permission to make the referral and share information about your child and family. You can also refer your child, or your young person can ask directly for help (see next page).



childrenandfamilyhealthdevon.nhs.uk

What are you looking for today?

I would like to ______ for ______

about ______ go

Request for Service Form Required

t: 0330 024 5321 e:CFHD.DevonSPA@nhs.net

Services that can be accessed through CFHD are:

- Specialist School Nurses
- Autism Spectrum Assessment Service
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Children in Care Service
- Community Children’s Nursing Service
- Devon’s Family Information Service for Children with Additional Needs (SIGNPOST plus)
- Devon Early Years Complex Needs Service
- Learning Disability Team
- Occupational Therapy
- Palliative Care
- Public Health Nursing
- Rehabilitation Officers for Visually Impaired Children (ROVIC)
- Social Services – Disabled Children’s Service
- Specialist Children’s Assessment Centres (SCAC)
- Speech and Language Therapy

Within a week or two, you should get a letter telling you whether the referral has been accepted and what you need to do. If the referral has been accepted your child will be added to the waiting list and when they’re near the top of that list, you’ll get a letter with an appointment. If the referral isn’t accepted, you and the professional who made the referral will be told that, along with the reasons why. There are usually other ways of getting support included in that letter.

2. A direct referral to Devon Education Services

Devon Education Services provides specialist support, teaching and advice to schools and professionals in Devon. They work with children and young people from birth to 19 years of age.

There are several teams of specialists:

Communication and Interaction –supports children and young people with autism and speech, language and communication needs

Sensory and physical – supports children and young people with visual impairment, deaf and hearing impairment and multi-sensory impairment and those with severe physical difficulties

Social, Emotional and Mental Health – including behaviour support – supports children and young people with significant social, emotional and mental health difficulties

Most of the staff are qualified, specialist teachers with extra qualifications and/or experience. There are also Deaf Inclusion Workers, Braille Teachers and a Resources Co-ordinator for Large Print and Braille.

Your child’s SENCO should tell you what support has been agreed and when it’s happening.

3. Support through the Early Help process.

If you’ve had an Early Help Assessment then that’s another way to get extra, more specialised support for your child and family. You can find out more about this in the section above.

Can I get specialist help for my child?

Yes, you can find and ask for specialist help too. If your young person is age 16 or over, they can also ask for help directly. Here are the main ways to get more help and support. Details of all are at the end of this booklet.

Devon SEND Local Offer

The Devon Local Offer website has information about a wide range of support and services, including specialist services. It tells you what's out there to support your child and your family and how to access it or be referred to it.

Children and Family Health Devon (CFHD)

This is the central place for referrals for specialist health services. You might sometimes hear it called the SPA, which stands for Single Point of Access.

CFHD has a referral form which you can fill out to ask for help. It's important at this stage that you and any professionals give as much evidence as you can to support the 'ask' for specialist help.

You can access lots of different health services this way including speech and language therapy, autism assessment and the disabled children's service. You can find a full list and details about what happens to referrals when they're sent in, on page 28.

Your GP or health visitor

Your GP is often a good place to ask for help for your child. If they can't directly refer you, they may know where you can get help or how to access it. If you're worried about your child, or their behaviour, and think they might need to be assessed, talk to your GP first. They can make a referral if needed.

National and local organisations and services

There are national and local organisations that can give you advice and support. If your child has a diagnosis, or health condition, there's likely to be a support organisation. Many of these have detailed information for parents and young people and some offer helplines, training and courses.

If you have an adopted or fostered child, Adopt South West are a good place to start. They have a phone service that's open for support or general advice, or to make an enquiry for an assessment for more specific support. Devon's virtual school supports children in care, adopted children and those under a special guardianship order in school.

The Council for Disabled Children has an information list which gives details of organisations who provide free advice and support (such as phonelines, emails, direct support etc) on a range of matters relating to SEN and Disability in England.

There are national organisations that support families with a disabled child, whether they have a diagnosis or not. These include Contact, Scope and Mencap. Contact has information about thousands of conditions including support groups.

If you need support with money matters, claiming benefits or knowing what you might be entitled to, Quids for Kids may be able to help. It's part of Citizens Advice in Devon and they give specialist advice to families who have a child with SEN.

DiAS has the Ambassador Volunteer programme. Ambassador volunteers connect parents in their communities and more widely into a network across Devon. Some are mums and dads of children with SEND and some are professionals and support staff who work with them.

What they all have in common is a desire to help families and an understanding of what life is like with a child with SEN. You can find out whether there's a volunteer in your area or connect with someone on our website.

What is an Educational Psychologist and what do they do?

An Educational Psychologist (EP) is a specially trained psychologist. They are an expert in child development and education.

They use their expertise to help children and young people with difficulties around:

- thinking, learning and memory
- solving problems
- understanding their behaviour and feelings
- relationships and communication
- study skills

Sometimes a SENCO might suggest it would be helpful for them to get advice from an educational psychologist about your child, or for them to see your child and assess them. If they want to do that, you will need to agree to it.

You can find out more about what an Educational Psychologist does on our website.

What happens if school and specialist support isn't working?

Sometimes, even with specialist advice and help, the support for a child doesn't seem to be enough or it isn't right. Your child may not make the progress that's expected and start to fall further behind other children their age. Or their difficulties in school may get worse not better, and their behaviour at school or home can become more challenging.

If things aren't going well for your child and they're not making the progress you would expect, your first step is to ask for a meeting to review their nursery, school or college plan. At the meeting you can talk about the support they're getting, what may need to change and how you'll know if any new support is working.

If reviewing the plan and making changes to the support doesn't make a difference, you can ask whether the next step should be a needs assessment for an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. You can find out more about this in the section about EHC assessments and reviews on our website, or in our booklets.

Helpful Resources

Devon SEND Local Offer

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

SEND Code of Practice – version for parents and carers

www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25

Children and Family Health Devon

childrenandfamilyhealthdevon.nhs.uk/

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CFHD.DevonSPA@nhs.net

Devon Safeguarding Children Partnership (Early Help)

www.devonscp.org.uk/

Contact

contact.org.uk

0808 808 3555

Notes

How can DiAS help?

There is information on our website, or you can contact us for copies of our booklets and factsheets. We have an enquiry service which you can access by phone or by using the form on our website. We have a network of Ambassador Volunteers across the county, who can give you support in your local community.

We can give you advice about:

- Managing and preparing for meetings.
- Working well with professionals.
- Understanding processes, such as SEN Support, Education Health and Care Plan needs assessments and reviews.
- Making decisions, by talking about what all your options are and the pros and cons of each.
- Knowing how to do practical tasks, such as getting your child referred to a specialist.

DiAS is a free, confidential and impartial service. We give information, advice and support to parents, carers, children and young people about special educational needs and disability. We give support about any aspect of SEND education and support.

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www.devonias.org.uk

DiAS
Devon Information Advice and Support
for Special Educational Needs and Disability

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