

Assessments, Plans and Reviews



A Guide for Parents & Carers

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Why should I participate?

You know your child best. Parents' views are important and your long term participation can make a positive difference to your child's life outcomes.

The new Children and Families Act 2014 says that parents' views will be listened to and that parents will have greater choice over their child's special educational needs and disability (SEND) support. In response to this, Devon has developed the Devon Assessment Framework (DAF) – a process that allows for your and your child's involvement in assessments and reviews that are to do with your child's additional needs.

How do I participate in assessments and plans?

Your right to participate gives you the opportunity, and responsibility, to explain your views to school staff and other professionals at meetings and in reports. You may be involved in a wide range of assessments for your child across education, health and social care and these may be brought together within the Devon Assessment Framework (DAF) if your child needs a plan to support his/her needs. You will have an opportunity to put forward your views, suggestions and evidence for the assessment and a plan will be drawn up that takes these into account. The plan is likely to include the following elements:

- **Needs** - that your child has that are different from, or additional to, other children's needs of the same age.
- **Outcomes** - to describe what your child, you and professionals are hoping will be achieved by them. The outcomes stated in any plan should be **SMART** - **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime-bound.
- **Provision** - to outline what support will be needed to help achieve the agreed outcomes in your child's plan. The provision can include things that you will do, as well as the strategies and support that the school and other services can put in place.
- **Reviews** - so that you can be included in discussions about which outcomes have been wholly or partly achieved and decisions can be made about which new outcomes might need to be set so that your child continues to progress.

Can I get help to participate?

Yes. Accessing support will help you to develop your participation skills and there are many sources of **information, support, advice and materials** available for you.

Information is available through:

- **Devon Information Advice & Support (DIAS)** – we have a website and a range of impartial information leaflets that are designed for parents www.devonias.org.uk
- **School, college or early years staff, as well as other health or social**

- care professionals** – can all provide you with information about the assessments they might undertake and the processes involved in them.
- **Voluntary organisations and charities** – might be able to give you information about your child's specific needs or disability so that you can be better informed.
- **Local Offer** – Local Authorities have to publish information about what can be expected regarding support for children and young people with SEND. This information is called the Local Offer and is available at www.devon.gov.uk/send. Parents, children and young people are encouraged to comment on what is available in the Local Offer.
- **CSW Group** (formerly Careers South West) – for information about SEND processes and assessments for 14 to 25 year olds. www.careerssw.org

Support and Advice is available from:

- **Education staff and other professionals** – who are working with your child.
- **Family and friends** – who may know you and your child well.
- **Independent Supporters (IS)** – who can support you through the statutory education, health and care needs assessment process. In Devon, you can access an IS through DIAS or CSW Group.
- **Devon Information Advice & Support (DIAS)** – an impartial service providing an officer covering your area. See our leaflet '**A guide to Devon Information, Advice and Support Service**' for our full service.

Materials are available for you and your child to use:

There is a range of documents and materials that DIAS has developed to help you record your views and aspirations so that they can be included in assessments and plans about your child. Alternatively, you may choose to write down your views in a letter or a report – you can choose the format that suits you best. You may also prefer to give your views verbally at the meeting itself and ask for them to be recorded in the meeting notes.

How should I start preparing my views?

Whichever format you use, we suggest you jot down your ideas and thoughts over a period of time and ask other family members and friends if they have anything they can add. Think about how you would describe your child to a close friend. Our list of topics and questions overleaf may help you to think about some of the areas you can include (a full list of questions can be found on our website) but you may think of additional ones that are specifically appropriate to your child. You might also like to give examples to illustrate your points (eg it helps my child to trampoline with a friend after school when he is stressed) and explain any patterns that you have noticed over the years.

Early years

Your child's birth, crawling, walking and talking – did they all happen when expected?

Playing and learning at home

What does your child like doing at home? How do they cope with the day to day routines? Does your child have any hobbies? Are they able to be on their own, with an adult in another room?

Pre-school and school

How does your child feel about school? What progress are they making? What help do you think your child needs in the classroom or playground? What help has already been given?

Motivation and aspiration

Does your child enjoy a challenge? Do they struggle to make a start or finish something once started? What do they want to be or do 'when they grow up'?

Physical ability

Can your child get around and play active games? If so, are they active for an hour a day? And what physical skills do they have? Do they have a good sense of danger? How is their hand-eye coordination?

Emotional health

How is your child's self esteem and confidence? How is their mood generally? Do they worry? Do they have tantrums?

How do I participate in reviews?

Your child's support and plans will be reviewed regularly and you will be invited to review meetings about this. These can be either short or long term reviews. You can also ask for interim review meetings (between the usual review dates) if your child's needs or circumstances change significantly and you have concerns about the impact of this.

What happens at review meetings?

There are three parts at most review meetings:

- reviewing - your child's outcomes
- planning - any new outcomes and the provision and support required to meet them
- setting a date - for the next review meeting

How do I prepare for review meetings?

You can ask for review meetings to be at a time when they are convenient for you, as well as for school staff and other professionals, as it is important that you are able to attend.

In advance of the meeting, look through your copy of your child's plan as well as any notes or minutes you have from the previous review meeting. In addition, look through any reports from professionals, plus other relevant information, that may have been sent to you since the previous review. You can ask specific professionals to attend or write reports for the meeting if this would be helpful.

Communication and language

How does your child ask for things, remember messages, copy sounds, join in conversations or explain things? Can they tell a joke?

Relationships

How does your child relate to you, other family members, children, friends or teachers? Do they have a special friend or lots of friends? Do they belong to a club or groups?

Behaviour

Does your child share and co-operate with others? Do they fit in with family rules and routine like bed time? Do they generally do what you ask them to do? Or what others ask them to do?

Independence and self-help

Are they becoming more independent or do they still need help? Do they tidy their toys and room, budget their pocket money, get out and about with friends?

General health

Sleeping patterns, eating habits, medication, illnesses or accidents and any time spent in hospital.

You can prepare a report or a letter or you can write a list of key points to express your views and to take to the review meeting. You can ask for your contribution to be shared with professionals before and at the meeting. Your report or list could include:

Your views about the current plan:

- has your child made adequate progress towards, or met, each outcome on the plan?
- has the provision and support worked well?
- is there something else that might work better?
- have the actions agreed been undertaken by the person responsible?

Your views about the next plan:

- have your child's needs changed?
- are there any new outcomes you would like to be included in the plan?
- what provision and support will be needed for these?
- is your child due to start primary school, secondary school or college or are they moving on into adulthood?

It is helpful to take your diary or calendar to the meeting so that a date can be set for the next review meeting that suits you.

Which assessments and reviews might my child be asked to participate in?

Your child should be asked to participate in most assessments and reviews – for example those related to the Devon Assessment Framework (DAF). This does not mean they have to attend every meeting (they may not want to or they may be anxious about attending) but it does mean that capturing their views is important. Even a very young child can have something to contribute.

From the age of fourteen, your child may be involved in discussions about preparation for their transition to sixth form, further education, apprenticeships and adulthood. If they have a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education Health & Care plan (EHC plan) such discussions will involve CSW Group.

The new legislation is clear that from the last academic day of the school year in which a young person reaches the age of sixteen, the local authority and other agencies should normally engage directly with the young person, rather than the parent. It is the young person who is given the right to appeal against decisions made about their support and, where there are different views, those of the young person should prevail over those of the parent. This could be difficult for some parents to absorb but the new law is recognising the unique knowledge that young people with SEND have about themselves and it is important that they are supported to contribute their own views.

Devon Information Advice & Support (DIAS) has written a leaflet - **'Your child or young person has a view too'** - about how you can support your own child to participate in assessment and review processes. We have also produced a range of materials that can be used by young people, such as All About Me.

When your young person is eighteen

Once eighteen, your young person can make their own decisions and complete forms to do with their support. They may, however, need support, experience and training over several years to be in a good position to do this well. In some cases, where it is shown that a young person does not have capacity to make a particular decision, the Mental Capacity Act 2005 may allow for another person to decide something in their best interests.

The assessments, plans and processes for those who are over eighteen may vary as these could be about work, higher education, income, housing, health, social care or a combination of them. Whether your young person is living independently or with you at home they will usually have all the responsibility (including budgeting and completing applications) that most adults have – although they may need more support to do this effectively.

Information sharing and confidentiality

You will be asked for your consent to allow professionals to share the information you give them with other **relevant** professionals and services. You are able to say who should and should not receive such information and which information is appropriate to share with whom. The Data Protection Act means that what you write should never be in the public domain and it gives you the right to ask for a copy of what is held on record about your child (though you may be asked to pay photocopying/postage costs).

How can Devon Information Advice & Support help?

We can provide information, advice and support with all aspects of assessment, planning and review processes.

We can support you by:

- talking to you about different assessments, including the DAF
- explaining what happens at review meetings and helping you to prepare for them
- talking to you about ways in which you can liaise with others
- discussing outcomes you may want to consider for your child
- explaining the roles of the people involved
- discussing how you can support your child to express their own views



Contact Devon Information Advice & Support on **01392 383080** or email **devonias@devon.gov.uk**

We have further leaflets and information online at:
www.devonias.org.uk

You can also find us on Facebook

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