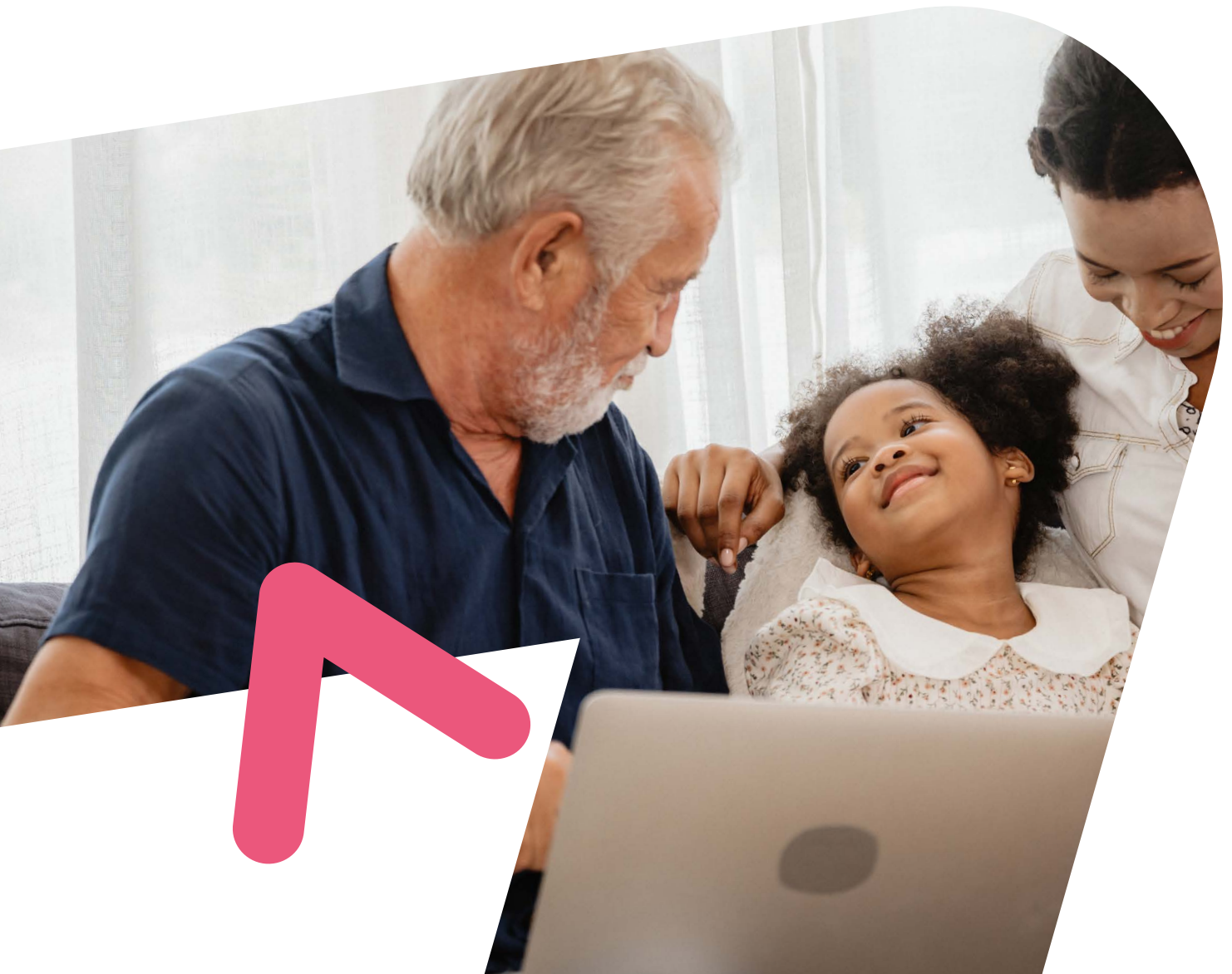




Key features for an effective Education, Health and Care Plan Digital Hub





About this resource


As part of the Delivering Better Outcomes Together programme, funded by the Department for Education, the Council for Disabled Children has delivered a significant number of trainings and workshops on strengthening local Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). One of the most commonly recurring challenges raised by local areas in these workshops is that, although there is will and motivation to coordinate input from professionals across the process, there is limited time and capacity to do so effectively. Many local areas are seeking a digital solution to this challenge, in the form of a digital portal or hub which can draw together input from different stakeholders and act as a central source of information for a child or young person's plan.

This resource has been developed to draw together experiences from different local areas in order to highlight effective practice, key features and challenges to be aware of.

We would like to thank all of the individuals and local areas who contributed to this resource by sharing their experiences.

What is the purpose of an EHCP Hub?

An EHCP Hub is a digital platform supporting multi-agency engagement, contributions, and collaboration on EHCP assessments, plans and reviews. A successful Hub offers transparency for families, professionals and practitioners, enabling effective joint working. The Hub is where a child or young person's progress through the EHCP process is recorded, so parents, carers and professionals can follow the journey, add and view relevant reports and contributions, and see any decisions made.



What challenges do EHCP Hubs seek to address, and how?

Challenge

<p>Families are not aware of how an individual's plan is progressing</p>		<p>Families can track their EHCP journey</p>
<p>Families have to repeat their stories to multiple professionals</p>		<p>Supports a 'tell it once' approach</p>
<p>Advice givers are not aware of the child or young person's aspirations and outcomes sought</p>		<p>Advice givers can access the child's aspirations and outcomes sought, often including creative forms of communication (e.g. art and videos)</p>
<p>Advice givers are not aware of each other's advice, and how this intersects with their own to form a network of support</p>		<p>Advice givers can access each other's advice; Health advice can be coordinated</p>
<p>Families and advice givers do not have an opportunity to review the draft plan before it is finalised</p>		<p>All relevant stakeholders can access the draft plan</p>
<p>Advice givers (particularly Health) do not have sufficient warning of an Annual Review to prepare and contribute</p>	  	<p>The hub will send out reminders with sufficient notice (6 weeks) for reviews, which will enable more involvement from health partners.</p> <p>Designated Medical Officers/ Designated Clinical Officers can have oversight of Health advice and contributions</p> <p>All relevant stakeholders can access the draft plan</p>

How an EHCP Hub can help

Who should be able to access the Hub?

The most effective EHCP Hubs are the ones that enable all relevant stakeholders to access and contribute, including:

- Parent carers, families
- Advice givers (education, health, social care, voluntary sector where appropriate)
- DMOs/DCOs

What are the benefits of an effective EHCP Hub?

Support for Families

- Co-production with families is more effective and families feel more involved
- 'Tell it once' works
- The individual (and/or their parent carer/s where appropriate)'s views, wishes and preferences are at the centre of the process
- Reduces time spent on admin and seeking updates
- Simplifies reports

- Simplifies admin:
E.g. generating letter templates, sending out report requests, sending EHCP plans to families and schools
- Provides an electronic trail of communications
- Having a single point of contact allows an overview of compliance and reporting, and of any challenges that are encountered; which enables support and advice to services where needed in a safe and effective way.

Support for SEN Case Officers

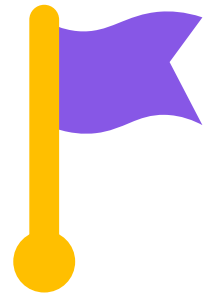
Support for Advice Givers

- Templates simplify and focus reports, reducing preparation time for panel meetings etc.
- Practitioners are able to access outcomes, and align their support accordingly.
- Weekly reminders of any outstanding actions.
- Sharing panel information.

What helps to embed an EHCP Hub and make it effective?

Strategic and Planning:

- Phased launch of the Hub, which can include pilot areas within a Local Authority, and starting with new cases only on the Hub, while transferring the older ones in time for their annual reviews
- Mapping out local providers, identifying which service sit with whom, and nominating a lead for each service
- Quality Assurance Group which is dedicated to the Hub
- A Hub Development Group to address and share challenges, adapt the Hub to the local needs, and improve the systems that are in place
- Data-sharing agreements put in place near the start of the process



Workforce Training and Support Staff:

- An administrator to manage all the requests for information
- Digital support for the workforce to learn and adapt to the new platform
 - Recurrent to mitigate staff turnover
- The software provider delivering training sessions throughout the year
- Ongoing shadowing, and 'super users' who can support new staff

Functionality:

- Using the same platform in overlapping areas, so professionals only have to learn to use one
- Digital support for families that are not IT literate or for those who aren't digitally included
- Effective communication and development work regarding the SPI which enables integration between the Local Authority system and the Hub
- Prompts such as 'are you sure' before adding and removing data to the Hub are helpful in maintaining data protection
- Including parents who have access to the Hub only through a mobile phone by providing them with a hard copy of the plan
- Child-friendly Hub with images and videos to get children and parents involved



Collaborative working:

- Buy-in from schools
- Dedicated SEND resource who knows all the local providers, able to build relationships, and cross reference
- In areas where school buy-in was high, a member of staff that was dedicated to the Hub engaged with the school to get them on board

What is holding them back from being as effective as they could be?



Technical issues – the Hub itself:

- Challenges in identifying a system which meets all the requirements
- There is no option of sending a plan for quality assurance without submitting it. There should be an option of a draft plan to be checked by a manager
- Limited to certain internet browsers
- Templates are generic and not adaptable to different areas/partners. This means that things can be missed or not noted
- Formatting doesn't always allow copy and paste, so partners that use Word to write up their reports (for example SALT) are unable to add their notes to the Hub
- The Hub does not include all aspects of SEND work (finance, mediations etc) so some recording needs to be done on a case management system as well, adding to the workload
- The Hub can be slow to access, the systems unreliable and difficult to navigate, and glitchy
- The Hub does not permit the inclusion of holistic outcomes; they must be identified as education, health or social care
- The list of CYP on the Hub gets longer and longer as more are added (in an alphabetical list). This can cause issues in terms of usability (you have to search for the CYP). It would be better if non-active cases were archived and the Hub only showed active
- Not all Hubs are accessible from a mobile phone

Technical issues – wider concerns:

- Challenges with alignment between different databases/ IT infrastructures
- Capacity from the business support to progress and move new teams onto it



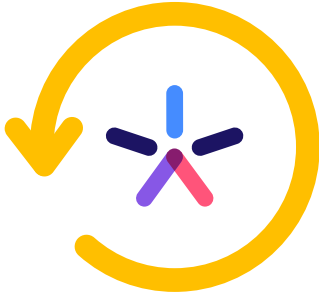
Workforce:

- Lack of training/workforce development on successfully using the Hub
- Lack of buy-in from education settings
- Lack of buy-in from providers, largely due to time commitment required to change processes
- Lack of consistency between areas; challenging for professionals working across multiple areas
- Unless addressed, the Hub can be a single point of failure. There is a need for a shared point of contact where the information comes into and how it's then distributed
- Changeovers of staff, especially in schools, can cause difficulties as several different people need access to same cases as part of the Annual Review process



Families:

- Excludes families with low (IT) literacy
- Excludes digitally poor families



Other:

- Some areas require a paper copy of a consent form, which means that copies need to be scanned and uploaded.
- To access an individual's file, there is a need for a link from the Local Authority, which often takes time to get and requires uploading additional copies of documents.
- The Hub is 'off the shelf' – it is not possible to personalise templates for different age groups.

Any examples?

Although a number of local areas have started using a digital Hub to support EHCPs, they are still at the beginning of their journey and are not yet able to demonstrate what difference this has made to families and the workforce.

If your local area is using a digital Hub or portal and you are beginning to see benefits (however small) and you would like to share your approach, please contact Philippa at pwatts@ncb.org.uk.