

**Essex County Council**

**Education Access:**

 **Request for Support guidance**

**Education Access: June 2025**

**Overview**

1. The Local Authority (LA) has a statutory duty under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 to provide suitable education at school or otherwise than at school for those children of compulsory school age who, by reason of illness, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them.
2. The Education Access Team can offer a ‘request for support’ to schools where evidence indicates that the LA Section 19 duty is likely to be triggered without such intervention.
3. The Request for Support encompasses three referral pathways. The distinction between each referral route is summarised below:
	* **PRU placement** a request for a short-term placement at the Pupil Referral Unit.
	* **Exceptional funding** is a request for an intervention or provision that is suitable to the pupil’s age ability, aptitude, and any SEN, that:
		+ cannot be guaranteed via the LA’s commissioning pathways, or
		+ is not otherwise available via the LA’s commissioning pathways.
	* **Exceptional provision** is a request for support through the LA’s commissioned IPES framework for a pupil who is likely to trigger the LA’s section 19 threshold.
4. All referral pathways are intended as short-term interventions, with the aim of supporting reintegration back to the referring school.

**PRU placement**

**Threshold**

1. A request for support placement at the PRU is a non-punitive approach for a pupil whose needs and circumstances have made them more vulnerable in their education setting.
2. Schools will have already identified the requirement for a graduated approach and will have been providing intervention/support and involving wider services.
3. Where a request for support PRU placement is being sought for a pupil at risk of exclusion, parental consent must be sought prior to making the referral. The school and the Education Access team must act in accordance with statutory guidance and must ensure that the agreement does not constitute an illegal exclusion, with the parent/carer being denied their right to make representations to the governing board.
4. The referring school must commit providing ongoing support the pupil and ensure the pupil is kept in mind and continues to feel part of the school community. Schools should plan to visit the pupil at the PRU so relationships can be maintained.
5. The referring school must attend all attending placement planning and review meetings to ensure that provision remains suitable and is working towards agreed placement objectives.
6. The referring school must actively support and encourage the pupil’s reintegration. A joint plan should be put in place outlining the support package and resources needed to help the pupil to reintegrate back into mainstream schooling successfully.

**Accessing support**

1. Schools are encouraged to speak with the Education Access team to ascertain whether the PRU has the capacity to consider a request for support placement. Schools may be directed to an alternative pathway if there is insufficient capacity at the PRU.
2. To access a request for support PRU placement, schools are required to complete the referral paperwork. Referral paperwork must be completed in full.
3. The Education Access team will triage the referral paperwork to determine whether the request meets the threshold for further consideration at the quadrant panel meeting. The Education Access team will confirm the outcome of the request with the referring school.
4. For referrals from secondary schools, the school will be required to attend the quadrant panel meeting to present the case. Each panel will include representatives from the PRU, Education Access, school representatives and wider agencies. The outcome of the referral will be determined at panel and will include a rationale for the decision.
5. For referrals from primary schools, the school will either be required to attend the quadrant panel meeting, where they are set up to consider such requests, or a separate meeting will be arranged with the Education Access team and the PRU. The Education Access team will confirm the route for consideration with the referrer.
6. Placements will be agreed for one term initially. Extensions can be discussed with the Education Access Specialist at the placement review meeting and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
7. Any pupil who is accessing a request for support PRU placement will remain on roll to the referring school. The referring school must ensure that they fulfil their safeguarding duties whilst the pupil is accessing offsite alternative provision. The school must also consider how the pupil remains part of the school community whilst they access their alternative provision placement, as this is imperative to a successful reintegration.
8. The PRU can apply for transport, and **if** awarded, this will be for public transport only. If an alternative to public transport is required, it will be the responsibility of the school or parent/carer to arrange.

**Exceptional funding**

**Threshold**

1. The Education Access team can consider financial support to schools where it is evident that the LA’s Section 19 duty is likely to be met without intervention, and the school can make available a package of support that is suitable to the pupil’s age, ability and aptitude and SEN.
2. Exceptional funding requests will be considered to support schools with the cost of funding an intervention or alternative provision for individual pupils. Requests for strategic support should be discussed with the school’s IP who can advise on whether a referral through the Inclusion Framework is appropriate.
3. Funding requests should clearly outline the rationale for intervention. Exceptional funding agreements are time-limited interventions with an identified exit strategy. Requests for ongoing support will not be approved.
4. Where exceptional funding is being sought for a pupil at risk of exclusion, parental consent must be sought prior to making the referral. The school and the Education Access team must act in accordance with statutory guidance and must ensure that the agreement does not constitute an illegal exclusion, with the parent/carer being denied their right to make representations to the governing board.
5. The Education Access team may consider financial assistance to support with an offsite direction to alternative provision where it is evident that the school is actively seeking to avoid permanent exclusion. The school must seek approval from the Education Access team prior to any discussion with the parent/carer. The Education Access team will only consider referrals where it is evident that targeted support from alternative provision is able to meet the pupil’s individual needs and circumstances.
6. Where exceptional funding has been agreed to support with alternative provision, the school remain responsible for undertaking quality checks prior to working with the provider. The school must also ensure that provision is carefully planned and reviewed to ensure it remains suitable and is meeting the desired outcomes. Further guidance can be found here: <https://essexcc.pagetiger.com/safeguarding-AP/1>
7. As part of the evidence required to support a funding request, the Education Access team will need to be involved in placement planning and review meetings. Where attendance is not possible, the school must ensure that planning and review documentation is sent to the Education Access Specialist.
8. Funding requests should not exceed 12 weeks. If further funding is required beyond the 12-week period, schools will need to complete a new request.

**Accessing support**

1. The exceptional funding request must confirm the additional resource that is being requested, including a full breakdown of the placement costs and any contribution the school is intending to make. Where schools are in receipt of SEN Notional Funding, they will need to demonstrate how they have utilised this funding to provide additional support.
2. The Education Access Specialist will review the request to ensure that paperwork has been completed in full. The request will be listed for consideration at the next quadrant panel meeting. In some circumstances, funding requests will be considered outside of the quadrant panel, with a separate meeting being arranged between the school and the Education Access team. The Education Access team will confirm the route for consideration with the referrer.
3. Following the panel and/or meeting, a decision will be reached as to whether the threshold for exceptional funding has been met. It is important to note that funding will not be agreed for:
	* Transport to and from alternative provision
	* Additional staffing including staff supporting in the pupil’s home.
	* Resources
4. If exceptional funding is agreed, the Education Access Specialist will confirm with the referrer. Schools will be required to submit an invoice to initiate payment. A copy of the funding request, agreement and invoice should be sent to the Education Access Team Invoices mailbox: EAT.Invoices@essex.gov.uk
5. If the funding request exceeds £2,500, the Education Access Specialist will be required to present the request at the Education Access team’s Complex Advice Panel (CAP) for approval.
6. Any pupil who is in receipt on exceptional funding will remain on roll to the referring school. The referring school must ensure that they fulfil their safeguarding duties whilst the pupil is accessing offsite alternative provision. The school must also consider how the pupil remains part of the school community whilst they access their alternative provision placement, as this is imperative to a successful reintegration.

**Exceptional provision**

**Threshold**

1. A request for exceptional provision is appropriate to consider where schools are seeking support through the LA’s commissioned IPES (Individual Package of Educational Support) framework.
2. Exceptional provision requests are appropriate in circumstances where the type of alternative education required is available through the IPES framework, for example 1:1 tuition. Details of IPES providers can be found here: [Alternative Provision Directory](https://schools.essex.gov.uk/admissions-and-attendance/education-access/alternative-provision/alternative-providers-directory-0)
3. Exceptional provision requests cannot be used to circumvent the exclusion process. Exceptional provision referrals should only be considered in situations where the school is committed to the pupil returning to the school site, and for the pupil to remain part of the school community.
4. Where exceptional provision is being sought for a pupil at risk of exclusion, parental consent must be sought prior to making the referral. The school and the Education Access team must act in accordance with statutory guidance and must ensure that the agreement does not constitute an illegal exclusion, with the parent/carer being denied their right to make representations to the governing board.
5. Exceptional provision requests should clearly outline the rationale for intervention. Exceptional provision agreements are time-limited interventions with an identified exit strategy. Requests for ongoing support will not be approved.
6. Where exceptional provision has been agreed, the school remain responsible for undertaking quality checks prior to working with the provider. The school must also ensure that provision is carefully planned and reviewed to ensure it remains suitable and is meeting the desired outcomes. Further guidance can be found here: <https://essexcc.pagetiger.com/safeguarding-AP/1>
7. As part of the evidence required to support an exceptional provision request, the Education Access team will need to be involved in placement planning and review meetings. Where attendance is not possible, the school should ensure planning and review documentation is sent to the Education Access Specialist.

**Accessing support**

1. To access a request for support IPES placement, schools are required to complete the referral paperwork. Referral paperwork must be completed in full.
2. The Education Access team will triage the referral paperwork to determine whether the request meets the threshold for further consideration at either the quadrant panel meeting or school-based meeting. The Education Access team will confirm the outcome of the request with the referring school.
3. For referrals from secondary schools, the school will be required to attend the quadrant panel meeting to present the case. Each panel will include representatives from the PRU, Education Access, school representatives and wider agencies. The outcome of the referral will be determined at panel and will include a rationale for the decision.
4. For referrals from primary schools, the school will either be required to attend the quadrant panel meeting, where they are set up to consider such requests, or a separate meeting will be arranged with the Education Access team and the PRU. The Education Access team will confirm the route for consideration with the referrer.
5. Placements will be agreed for one term initially. Extensions can be discussed with the Education Access Specialist at the placement review meeting and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
6. Any pupil who is in receipt on exceptional provision will remain on roll to the referring school. The referring school must ensure that they fulfil their safeguarding duties whilst the pupil is accessing offsite alternative provision. The school must also consider how the pupil remains part of the school community whilst they access their alternative provision placement, as this is imperative to a successful reintegration.
7. Any pupil who is accessing an exceptional provision placement will remain on roll to the referring school. The referring school must ensure that they fulfil their safeguarding duties whilst the pupil is accessing offsite alternative provision. The school must also consider how the pupil remains part of the school community whilst they access their alternative provision placement, as this is imperative to a successful reintegration.
8. Home to school transport **will not** be awarded to support with exceptional provision requests. Transport arrangements will need to be agreed by the school or parent/carer.
9. **Pupils with an EHCP**
10. Education Access will not be able to consider requests for exceptional funding and exceptional provision for any pupil with an EHCP. All requests for pupils with an EHCP should be directed to the appropriate SEND Operations team for consideration.