



# The Assessment Process Talk

Feb 2021

# Lorna Tormey - HEN Chairperson

Mum to 2 kids Noah age 9 and Kara 6, started HE 4 years ago when we removed Noah from school. We are an unschooling family so lots of information here will be from that viewpoint as its my only lived experience and what works for our family. I feel all philosophies are valid and it is up to you and your family to choose what is right in your home.

# Agenda

7.00 Greetings

7.15 Lorna Present Slides (record this part)

8.00 Speaker?? Lorraine

8.15 Speaker?? Catherine / Gabby

8.30 Questions

8.45

9.00 Finish Meeting

# Important Documents

1. Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 - Section 14

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/22/section/14/enacted/en/html#sec14>

2. S.I. No. 330/2020 - Education (Welfare) Act 2000 (Prescribed Form) (Section 14) Regulations 2020  
Update to the Act in 2020

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2020/si/330/made/en/print>

3. Application Form Updated R1
4. Guidance\_Document\_R1\_Statutory\_Instrument\_AEARS.pdf
5. FAQ\_-\_AEARS.pdf

<https://www.henireland.org/what-is-home-education/legalities/>

<https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/alternative-education-assessment-and-registration-service/>

# When can I start home educating my child?

## **Taken from Tusla AEARS FAQ Document -**

*Home education can commence once you have received confirmation of the completed submitted application form from Tusla - Child and Family Agency. Until then your child must attend a recognised school.*

## **Taken from Educational Welfare Act -**

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/22/section/14/enacted/en/html#sec14>

*(3) The parent of a child who immediately before the commencement of this section is being educated in a place other than a recognised school shall, if he or she wishes the child to continue to be so educated, apply, not later than 3 months after such commencement, to the Board to have the child concerned registered in the register.*

We suggest you try to submit the form as soon as possible but we understand that sometimes you need time to make the decision.

# R1 Application Form - Part A

The form was changed in 2020 with the introduction of S.I. No. 330/2020 - Education (Welfare) Act 2000 (Prescribed Form) (Section 14) Regulations 2020. It took a few months for the information to be passed on Tusla updated the section on the website etc, so there was confusion around the forms in late 2020.

**Details** of the child, Parent(s), additional guardians

**Additional Information** - have you previously applied for HE

**Siblings** - a younger sibling applying for HE often triggers a follow up for older siblings, presume it may just be to make a “family file”

*Action - officially ask Tusla AEARS if this is the case*

**Education History** - so they can notify the school of the HE application

**Additional Learning and Support Needs** - they do have additional checks that carry out for children with a diagnosis. Our understanding is that they just want to make sure that any supports the child was getting in school can be provided for at home. Or if the child has a learning difficulty that the parent is able to support the child. From a HE view its not really that different for most children, the parents are always the primary support even if the child is access services. Often the lack of services is so bad the parent is sent on a course to learn it anyway so this section should not be any more a worry and as always it is up to you how much information you wish to give.

*Action - ask tusla is there a specific requirement here*

Where the education will take place and who will provide the education.

*Action - do additional people have to be present at the assessment?*

## Part B

### 8. Time devoted to education of child / Time proposed to be spent on education of child

*The informal or semi-informal nature of home-based education may make it difficult to estimate accurately the amount of time allocated to learning. However, some information under the headings below may be useful in establishing a general pattern of the educational provision. If possible, please supply information on:*

- *the time allocated/to be allocated to the education of the child.*
- *whether learning is provided for in an open-ended manner, or whether learning activities are scheduled, or partly scheduled, using a timetable following a daily/weekly/monthly pattern.*
- *the estimated number of days during the year on which education is/will be provided.*
- *if any records are/will be maintained of the time/periods/days devoted to education.*

As a family we believe learning happens all day, everyday, 365 days a year. We don't feel keeping records would be appropriate.

## 9. Equipment and materials

*Please provide brief details of some of the main items/publications/materials used to support the child's learning. These may include curriculum documents, specialised educational equipment, reference materials/text books, or everyday objects and materials including books, magazines, toys, videos etc.*

Toys, musical instruments, dress up clothes  
Computers, tablets, TV, online games, google home  
Puzzles, card games,  
Art materials, craft supplies, play dough  
Books, Magazines, Borrow box  
Outdoors swings, mud kitchen, play shop  
Bikes, scooters



## 10. Educational Activities

*Please give a brief account of the educational provision made / to be made for the child's learning including:*

- *Provision for the development of literacy and numeracy skills; physical skills; social, emotional and moral.*
- *What are the main areas of learning for which provision is/will be made?*
- *What type of education is being/will be provided? Do any particular principles or philosophies inform the education?*
- *What approaches or methods are/will be used to facilitate learning? (e.g. autonomous learning, semi-structured approaches, structured learning, a mixture of these)*
- *If the education provided is based on any published curricula or learning programmes, please give details.*

We are an unschooling family, we understand that children can and will direct their own learning, at their pace without formal education. We have been practicing this for almost 4 years and have seen learning happens when children live in a supportive, caring environment with access to information, people and the world.

We are aware of all the areas on the national curriculum and see our children learning in all these areas, if specific resources are needed we will be happy to support the children in accessing these if they wish.

***NOTE:*** *Meeting the requirements of a 'certain minimum education' does not mean that a child must follow any particular curriculum delivered in a school setting. However, if a child were to return to a formal school-based education at primary or post-primary level at any stage, parents/guardians, in planning a home education programme for their children, should be conscious of the curriculum requirements, and teaching and learning structures to which they may return.*

# National Curriculum

[www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie)

The Arts Education

Mathematics

Social Environmental and  
Scientific Education

Physical Education

Religious Education

Primary Language

Social, Personal and  
Health Education

**Visual Arts** - Drawing, Paint and colour, Print, Clay, Construction, Fabric and fibre

**Drama** - Exploring and making drama, Reflecting on drama, Cooperating and communication in making drama.

**Music** - Listening and Responding, Performing, Composing.

**Maths** - Number, Algebra, Shape and space, Measures, Data

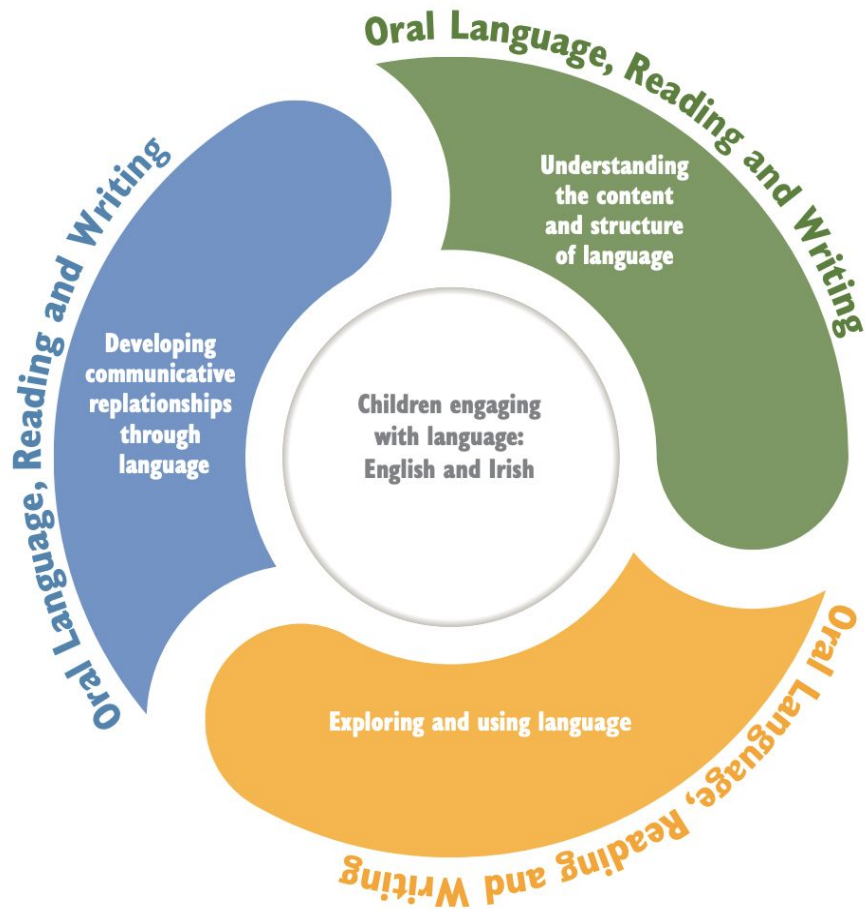
**Social Env & Science** - History, Geography, Science

**PE** - Athletics, Dance, Gymnastics, Games, Outdoor and adventure activities, Aquatics.

**Religion** - The development and implementation of the curriculum in religious education in primary schools remains the responsibility of the relevant patron bodies.

**Primary Language** - Next Slide

**Social , Personal, Health** - fosters children's well-being, self-confidence and sense of belonging, develops children's sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and action, promotes children's self-awareness and understanding by helping them to manage their own feelings, to recognise and appreciate individual abilities, and to cope with change of various kinds, supports children to become active and responsible citizens.



# Aistear - “Journey”

Aistear is the curriculum framework for children from birth to 6 years in Ireland. It provides information for adults to help them plan for and provide enjoyable and challenging experiences so that all children can grow and develop as competent and confident learners within loving relationships with others.

Aistear celebrates early childhood as a time of being, and of enjoying and learning from experiences as they unfold. It is underpinned by 12 interconnecting principles presented in 3 groups:

- Children and their lives in early childhood
- Children’s connections with others
- How children learn and develop

Each principle is presented using a short statement. This is followed by an explanation of the principle from the child’s perspective. This explanation highlights the adult’s role in supporting children’s early learning and development. The framework uses the following interconnectively to describe children’s learning and development:

- Well-being
- Identity and Belonging
- Communicating
- Exploring and Thinking.

They describe what children learn—the dispositions, attitudes and values, skills, knowledge, and understanding. Each one includes aims and broad learning goals for all children. The aims and goals outline the dispositions, values and attitudes, skills, knowledge, and understanding that the adult nurtures in children to help them learn and develop.

## 11. Monitoring progress

*Please give a brief account of how the child's progress is/will be monitored. Some points to consider may be:*

- *How is/will the child's progress be monitored/assessed?*
- *Are/will any records be maintained of the child's progress?*
- *What considerations has been given to how the learning needs of the child are/will be met over a period of time and whether plans are/will be recorded?*

We don't believe monitoring and assessing our children is right for our family, we have seen the issues this can cause when a child only learns or does an activity for a prescribed goal. We prefer the children to have open ended use of materials and the activities they choose to engage in.

We won't record the learning as stated it would mean we would be constantly writing down everything in our lives and what we do all day everyday. When the children meet milestones or want to record something themselves we often take pictures to record these for ourselves.

One of our main aims as a family is avoid anxiety, and this can very quickly get connected to mainstream learning goals, when in reality there is often a wide timeframe when these happen naturally.

## 12. Declaration

### I/We declare that:

- *The information provided on this application form is true and accurate.*
- *That both legal guardians have provided their personal details and contact information and have signed this application form.*

### I/We understand:

- *That in considering this application for registration, the Agency will arrange for an assessment to determine whether the education provision in place or proposed for the child, satisfies the requirements of a certain minimum education [s.14(5)(a,b,c) Education (Welfare) Act 2000].*
- *That as part of an application for home education assessment, that an authorised officer will verify the information provided in Part B above.*
- *That in order to ensure that the child continues to receive a “certain minimum education”, the Agency will carry out further assessments, and these assessments will be notified in advance [s.14 (7) Education (Welfare) Act 2000].*
- *That if, on receipt of the assessment report, the agency is unable to determine that a certain minimum education is being provided or likely to be provided, the Board may proceed to a further assessment [s.14(5)(i,ii,iii) Education (Welfare) Act 2000].*
- *That all assessment(s) will be conducted in accordance with any guidelines issues under Section 14, 15 and 16 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.*
- *That I/We will offer every assistance to an authorised person (assessor) in assessing the education provision in place or proposed for the child.*

### I/We consent:

- *For the Agency to have an authorised person conduct assessment(s) of the education in place or proposed for the child who is the subject of this application.*
- *For the Agency to verify any information provided on this application form.*

**I/We have enclosed a certified copy of the birth certificate or passport**  Yes

Signature of Guardian 1:

Date:

Signature of Guardian 2:

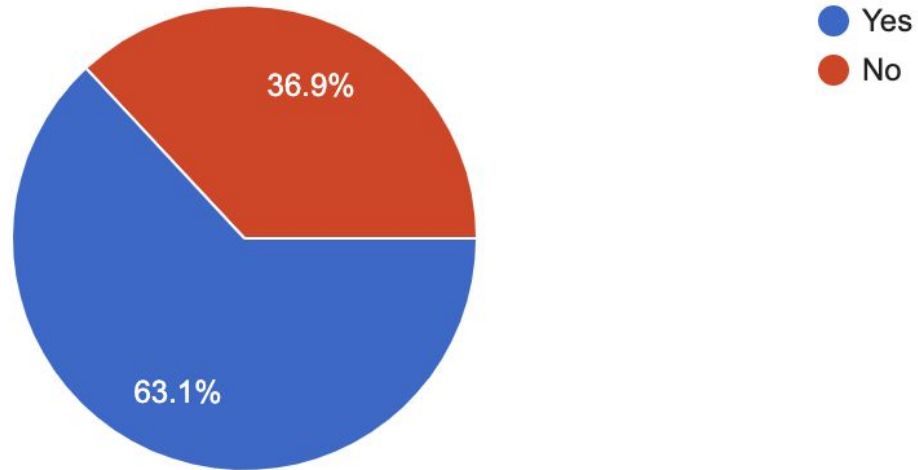
Date:

*All legal guardians must sign this form in order for the application to be processed.*

# HEN Survey 2020

Only regarding the PRELIMINARY assessment, was/were your child/ren present at the venue where the assessment took place?

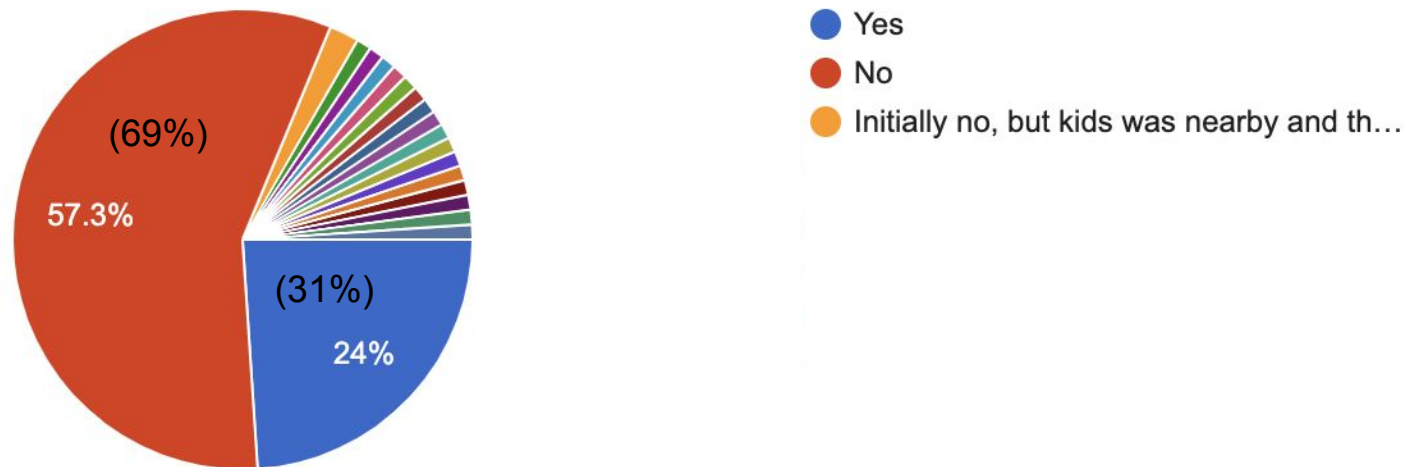
111 responses





Only regarding the PRELIMINARY assessment, if your child(ren) was/were present, did the assessor require to meet them?

96 responses



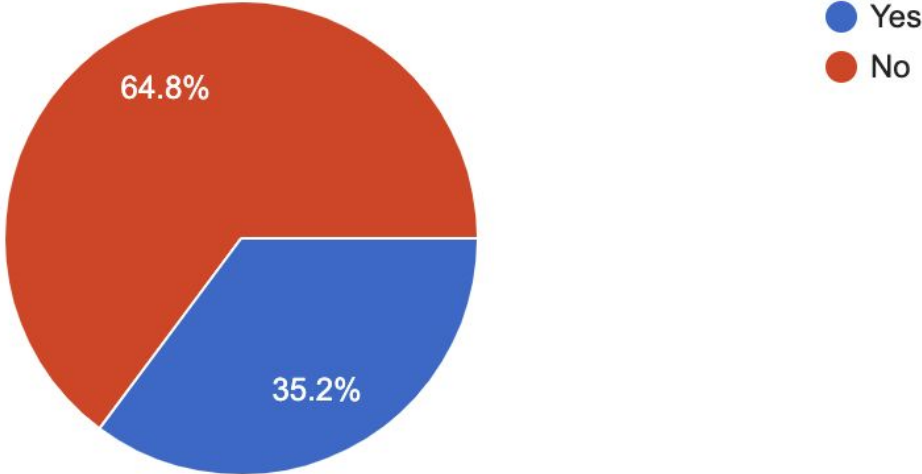
"They requested and I allowed (for 10 minutes). If I'd said no, I don't think they would have tried to "require" it."

"They were playing around us and he engaged with them, but didn't impose on them. He was extremely polite. "



Only regarding the PRELIMINARY assessment, did the assessor attempt to assess their level of knowledge in a particular subject (whether in person or by asking you to provide evidence)?

108 responses



## **Only regarding the PRELIMINARY assessment, please provide details of any questions the assessor asked to your child(ren).**

### **Examples of what HEN would expect you to be asked ....**

- It was just a brief greeting, no real questions asked.
- Asked about art work, hobbies, etc.
- Asked about music lessons... otherwise general small talk, as far as I can remember.
- it was just in conversation - which was very brief anyway.
- something like show me your picture. I remember kids asked questions to assessor
- I felt it was fair and just like a conversation. I was happy with it
- I think she asked them their interests, and when shown art projects asked about that in more detail.
- It was just a conversation and she was happy with the way my children mentioned different Irish names for different places.
- It was very casual, rather like meeting any new child and no predetermined Qs. Just making the child feel comfortable
- basic civilities - how are you, etc. Engaged with them politely depending on what they said.
- He asked to see their bookshelves etc, asked about their activities. He was very understanding and very supportive.
- None. Just hello and how are you
- None. They greeted her politely and then left.
- Did she enjoy being home schooled
- Did she like reading
- He just seemed to want to chat to him and asked him about daily activities he did. My child was very shy so he didn't have much luck.



Photographic evidence was asked to be provided of these things before the phone call assessment - this has become more common since the introduction of the phone/web assessments. These pictures don't have to be intrusive, think of them similar to what they may have viewed from just being in your home, toy/book shelves, kids playing with a board game, art work on the kitchen wall.

## Examples of things we would prefer you/ children not be asked unless you are willing to provide this ....

- He was asked to read out loud
- Asked them both to read from a book on our table, asked them both a question from a maths book
- Basic maths / literacy questions
- Asked about level of knowledge in maths...for example whether we had reached the level of learning & understanding the 3D shapes yet and what level we were at with telling time etc.
- What level their literacy skills were at, examples of their writing.
- He pointed at words on her workbook to see if X could read it and looked through a copybook to see her handwriting
- Math level (particularly Arithmetic, ability to perform basic operations and whether I could provide pictures of the child sitting and doing math workbooks); English level - vocabulary and grammar.
- Maths questions
- The assessors interacted with the boys in order to assess them, asking them basic questions. On both occasions, I showed them the work which we were completing.
- They asked them various questions to test their understanding of different subjects



**Only regarding the PRELIMINARY assessment, if you want to add any other detail, please do this here.**

Feedback we would expect to hear ...

- Assessor was very supportive and had home educated her children whilst working abroad
- Both times the experience was very positive
- I found assessment a very pleasant experience that made me and my husband feel very empowered to carry on home educating. They were very nice and respectful.
- I had a very positive experience.
- I really enjoyed them (two kids registered and assessed at different times)
- I submitted photographs to the assessor and they asked lots of questions about friendships and hobbies. I wasn't expecting the level of questioning. They were very pleasant to deal with.
- It was fine, never really had any problems.
- It was quite an extensive interview, very thorough but very pleasantly facilitated.
- It was very pleasant and relevant.
- It was very straightforward, got a lovely assessor, assessed over the phone during the pandemic, waited about 12 months for assessment
- Phone call took about 1h for one child. Assessor was happy with the answers we provided. No further evidence was required or asked from us.
- The assessor was very knowledgeable, kind, respectful, understanding and supportive.



**Only regarding the PRELIMINARY assessment, if you want to add any other detail, please do this here.**

Feedback we would prefer not to hear....

- Asked for proof of work
- Asked me what qualifications I had. I said they weren't supposed to ask that.
- I felt the assessors were completely unprepared for the assessment regardless of what information i had previously sent them with regards to what we were doing - teaching our kids in relation to basic coding skills
- I felt they were holding all the cards and we were seeking permission to home ed. I would not have the children there if doing it again.
- It was always very short notice after months of us waiting. The more recent ones wanted to see work by the children rather than being happy with the philosophy of education given.
- Remember second time, second assessor told me I'm nothing to worry if my kids don't know Gaelic, because they are not Irish . But later on in his verdict was written phrase about: children who do not know the Irish language are not eligible to go to university. Mother was warned about this. For me it was strange.
- The assessor was concerned when I mentioned that my 6 year old wasn't able to recognise small words. I educated the assessor about how there are statistics to prove that children who don't start learning to read until 7 are outperforming their peers by age 10. However, this was 10 years ago, so things may have changed.

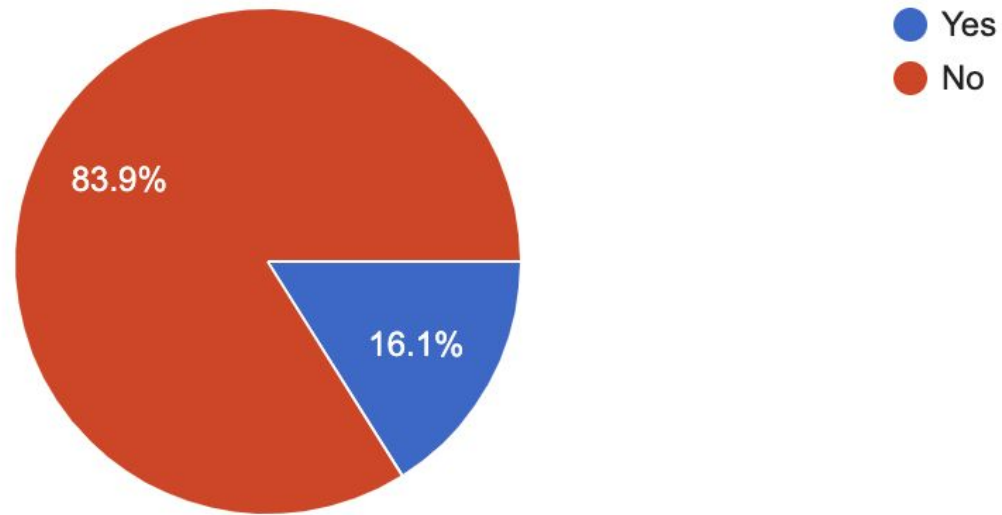


## Only regarding the PRELIMINARY assessment, how would you like the assessment process to be improved?

- **Consistency** in the process and a clearer understanding of what to expect from the process and the assessment itself.
- Consistency between assessors. Some in favour of unschooling, others aren't
  
- **Child friendly** language without the need for lanyards stating they are from the child and family department
- It would be good to have a brief bio of the assessor beforehand just to have an idea of the person behind the role.
- I was glad not to have my child present for the assessment. I also had a friend with me and did it at her house. I think it would be great if families were aware of the options.
  
- **Shorten** the assessment
  
- I would like assessors to be very **specific** about what we are required to be assessed on. I felt like I was being caught out on a few things for example he wanted to put down that we might return to school and that I kept detailed records when neither are very true.
  
- I would like it to be more **collaborative** in nature, and less of an obvious assessment process.
  
- I would like the assessors to take the time to do a little **research** of their own to build an understanding of why certain subjects like coding not taught in school at the time would be provided to children.
  
- Some assessors tell the parents they will be **recommend**, some don't. This causes extra stress and should be more consistent.
  
- **Less intrusive**, especially when questioning about a child with additional needs. If my child was in school I would be lucky to get 10 mins with their teacher but yet Tusla expects hours from a parent doing their utmost due to a failing school system with class sizes of over 35
  
- If HEN had its own assessor that would do the assessments, in a friendly helpful manner, so the parent can learn and feel confident on the journey, rather than feeling not good enough or judged.
- They should give parents advice, it should be completely supportive of parents. They have the ability to do this.

Did you have or is/was a a COMPREHENSIVE assessment considered for one of your children? (If not, you can skip ahead)

56 responses



# What happens after the assessment meeting ?

The assessor goes back and writes up their report, for us this looked like them adding to the original application form. They added additional information we may have discussed or observations they made on the situation.

They should get in contact with you within a few months, although this seems to now be months with the current backlog to tell you they are recommending you to be added to the register.

They will send a copy of the report to you, for review and you can ask for amendments to be made if you feel something wasn't documented correctly or taken out of context etc.

They will then finalize this report and have it signed off internally and then notify you again that you have been added to the register.

This could take anywhere from 6 months to 1 year, if your child was previously registered with a school you can expect to still be in on the school register and you will probably continue to receive communications from the school