

15th January 2021

Re: Covid-19 key messages for parents/carers of children and young people with an Education Health and Care (EHC) plan

We are aware that you may require some support and assistance during the current lockdown. As a service, we are here to help during this period of uncertainty and have included some information and tried to answer some of your questions below.

Can my child or young person attend school?

During the current lockdown, schools have been asked to offer places to all children who have an EHC plan.

Unlike the first lockdown, schools will not be completing risk assessment to establish whether a child or young person with an EHC plan is safer at home or school. This means that if you wish your child to attend school they can.

What support is available to schools?

If you have requested your child or young person attends their school, we have asked schools to work alongside families to support your wishes. We have provided schools with the contact details of our support services (Specialist Teaching Team and Educational Psychology) if they require any support and guidance.

Will the provision in my child or young person's EHC plan still be delivered?

While your child or young person is in school, they should continue to have their special educational needs met in line with the provision that is in the EHC plan. We are expecting that external health specialist (physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech and language therapist) will continue to be able to provide support. There may be some changes to how external health and educational specialists deliver this support.

Who will inform me of any potential changes of support?

You should be informed by school if there are going to be any changes to how the provision in your child's or young person's EHC plan is going to be delivered. In these circumstances, we have asked schools to organise a meeting with families to agree what support can be provided, where it will be provided and who will be providing this.

We have also asked schools to record this meeting formally and provide families with a copy once all parties agree. The school may wish to involve support services from the Local Authority, if appropriate. You may wish for support during this meeting. Please find the details of SENDIASS who will be able to offer independent advice and support:

- ❖ <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/services/bradford-sendiaass>
- ❖ 01274 513300

What is going to happen to my child's speech and language therapy during lockdown?

The government has asked health care providers who provide services to schools to continue to do so. The way the service is delivered might change (for example remotely rather than face to face). If you have any concerns please speak to your school first.

I am concerned about my child or young person going to school. Can they remain at home?

If you do not want your child or young person to physically attend school during the lockdown, you can ask for a leave of absence. Schools have been asked to agree with your wishes and record this as an authorised absence. The discussion with school should focus on the welfare of your child or young person to ensure that they are able to access appropriate education and support whilst they are at home. The school may wish to involve support services from the Local Authority, if appropriate.

Whilst my child is at home what work will be provided?

Your school must provide remote learning whilst your child or young person is at home. Remote learning should set meaningful and ambitious work each day in a number of different subjects.

The amount of work set should be equal in length to the core teaching your child or young person would receive in school. Lessons should be frequent, set clear explanations, introduce new content and delivered by a teacher or through high-quality curriculum resources or videos.

You should expect at least weekly checks that your child or young person is engaging with their work, and be informed if there are any concerns.

My child is clinically extremely vulnerable and has received a letter from our local GP to say they should shield. What do I need to do?

We would encourage you to speak to your school and discuss your concerns. Your school will support you and work alongside you to set up remote learning.

Can I change my mind? Can my child or young person go to school if I've previously asked for them to remain at home?

As an authority, we would encourage your child or young person to attend school during this time; however, we do understand that you may wish to keep your child or young person at home. At any stage, you can change your mind, either wishing for them to attend or not attend.

In either scenario, we would encourage you to speak with your school, arrange a meeting with your schools SENCO and follow the above guidance regarding support networks.

What support is there for families who do not have technology to access virtual learning?

If you are having issues with technology, please let your school know. The Government is sending out more laptops and tablets to schools to support families who have difficulties using technology to access remote learning.

Will schools still receive my child or young persons funding?

The local authority will continue to provide top-up funding to all schools during the lockdown whether your child or young person attends or not. This is so school can retain key support staff until schools fully open again.

I have an annual review in the next few weeks, will this still go ahead?

Since the first lockdown, schools have been successfully holding annual reviews virtually using either video platforms or conference calls. We are expecting that annual reviews will take place with schools continuing to hold these through virtual means.

The new annual review paperwork, launched in June 2020, works well in both virtual and face-to-face meetings. The report is split into two parts,

- Part 1 is to be completed before the meeting and distributed at least two weeks prior to the meeting date for all parties invited to read.
 - We have also asked schools to begin gathering this information at least 6 weeks before the review meeting giving everyone invited at least 4 weeks to contribute.
- Part 2 is to be completed at the annual review and is a record of the discussion held with a specific section for schools to record any actions

When will my child's EHC plan be updated?

The local authority will triage all EHC plans following an annual review to make the decision if an EHC plan is to be amended or not. The DfE have advised that the local authority should consider amending EHC plans at statutory phase transfers – EYFS, Year 6 into 7 and Year 1 into post 16 providers.

The local authority may also update an EHC plan when significant amendments are required to sections B and F following an annual review. If the local authority decides not to amend an EHC plan a letter will be provided to families notifying them of this decision.

My child or young person is in year 6 or year 11. When will I find out where they are going for year 7 or post 16?

The Local Authority is working hard to ensure that the phase transfer (children and young people moving between year 6 and 7 and from year 11 to post 16 education/training) process is completed within the statutory time limits.

I want my child to move schools during lockdown can this still happen?

The local authority will continue to undertake consultations with schools for children and young people who are going through the EHC assessment process. In addition, if your child or young person has an existing plan then we will place consults with other schools if you request these.

I am worried about my child's emotional wellbeing (mental health) during lockdown. What should I do?

Most children will be able to manage long periods away from school. Some children and young people can experience negative emotional impacts. This can show itself in lots of ways. For example, the child or young person may become quieter, angrier and more easily upset. If you have concerns about your child's or young person's wellbeing please let the school know.

Many schools now have Emotional Wellbeing Champions and the Local Authority has set up a new service of Emotional Wellbeing Practitioners to offer support to schools and work directly with children and young people. There is also free high quality online support through Bradford Council has funded Kooth, which is a web-based confidential support service available to young people. Kooth provides a safe and secure means of accessing mental health and wellbeing support designed specifically for young people. Kooth offers young people the opportunity to have a text-based conversation with a qualified counsellor. Counsellors are available from 12noon to 10pm on weekdays and 6pm to 10 pm at weekends, every day of the year on a drop-in basis. Young people can access regular booked online counselling sessions as needed. Outside counselling hours' young people can message our team and get support by the next day.

When students register with Kooth, they will have support available to them now and in the future. Support can be gained through not only counselling but also articles, forums and discussion boards. All content is age appropriate, clinically approved and fully moderated.

To find out more visit www.Kooth.com where young people can register and others can find out more about the service. You can also view a short video about the service at:

- <https://vimeo.com/318731977/a9f32c87de>.

You should also speak to you local GP about your concerns.

Sources of Support

You may also find the below websites and links useful support networks:

School transport

- <https://www.bradford.gov.uk/education-and-skills/travel-assistance/assistance-with-travel-to-home-school-and-college/>
- schooltransport@bradford.gov.uk
- 01274 439450

Bradford Local Offer

- <https://localoffer.bradford.gov.uk/>

The Parents' Forum for Bradford and Airedale

- <https://pfba.org.uk/>
- 01274 397396

If you have any further queries or wish to discuss a specific situation, then please contact our SEND Integrated Assessment Team on:

- SEN@bradford.gov.uk
- 01274 435750

We will endeavour to support you as best as possible.