

Advice for parents and schools about COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and how it will affect Education, Health and Care (EHC) assessments, EHC plans, reviews and provision

The situation with COVID-19 (Coronavirus) is rapidly changing. The SEN Assessment and Review Service are currently working remotely and would like to reassure you that we are following Government [guidance](#) on how to best provide a service and support to parents, families, schools and colleges for children and young people with an EHCP.

On 24 March 2020, the Minister for Children and Families, Vicky Ford, wrote an open letter to children and young people with SEND, their parents/carers and families, and all others who support them. The full text of the letter can be found [here](#).

The Minister's letter makes it clear that it is:

- important that as many children as possible remain at home during this time in order to help reduce the spread of the virus
- important that nurseries, schools and colleges work in partnership with the Local Authority to carry out a risk assessment to inform the decision making about whether a child/young person with an EHCP should continue in nursery, school or college, or whether their needs can be met at home safely.

Frequently Asked Questions

To help and guide you we have responded to some frequently asked questions from parents, carers and colleagues in education, health and social care. We have done our best to answer what we can, though as you know things are changing from day to day.

What do I do if I want to send my child to school because their needs cannot be met at home safely?

Our current advice is for parents of a child with an EHCP to talk to your school, or a member of the SEN Assessment and Review Service (SENARS) if the school has closed, who will work with you to find the best safe solution.

SENARS contact details:

Telephone number - 020 8051 8383

Email - senassessment.reviewservice@harrow.gov.uk

What do I do if the nursery/school my child is attending is closed?

All schools will remain open for key workers and vulnerable children. However, if they do have to close on the advice of Public Health England or for any other reason, the school will try and provide an alternative solution and will work with the Local Authority to ensure that families are supported and access to provision is maintained.

To support families we have provided [an online form](#), which key workers and parents of vulnerable children can complete to apply for alternative schooling for their child or children.

What do I do if I do not want to send my child to school?

If it is at all possible for your child to be at home then they should be. There is no requirement to send your child to school during these times. The Government guidance is quite clear – if a vulnerable child can be at home, they should be.

Does the Local Authority have a legal duty to provide the provision set out in my child's EHCP?

From a legal viewpoint this currently still remains the case. However, we are in challenging times and given the major disruption to staffing, it is very difficult for schools or the Local Authority to deliver precisely the provision in EHCPs.

The Local Authority is waiting on further Government [guidance](#) on its duty to provide provision as set out in an EHCP. In the mean time the Local Authority is doing whatever it reasonably can to best support children and young people with an EHCP.

If there could be a risk to your child's health or safety if they do not receive a particular provision or intervention, raise this with your school and Local Authority.

Are nurseries, schools, colleges and parents still able to request an EHC statutory assessment?

Requests for an EHC statutory assessment can still be made however it may not be the most appropriate time to make a request.

If professionals **are already** involved with the child or young person, and the education provider has been putting in place the advice they have provided, it is likely that there will be evidence to support a request.

If professionals **have not** been involved there may not be evidence of needs as required as part of the request. Due to the Government's social distancing order and the closure of nurseries, schools and colleges, professionals will not be able to see your child to assess them in the usual way.

My child's EHC assessment has already been agreed, will there be a delay in carrying out the assessment?

The Special Educational Needs Assessment and Review Service (SENARS) will keep working and your nominated officer will do their best to keep you updated but we foresee that there will be a delay in carrying out assessments.

Following a request, when the Local Authority decides to complete a statutory assessment, we ask a range of people (like teachers, educational psychologists (EPs) and other health and social care professionals for advice. During the Coronavirus outbreak this will be more difficult because:

- health and care staff may be asked to work in front line services instead of their usual role
- professionals may not be available – they may be sick, self-isolating or caring for children
- EPs will not be able to see your child in their education setting
- Schools may be closed and operating differently

My child's draft EHC plan has been issued will there be a delay in issuing the final EHCP?

Before issuing a final EHCP the Local Authority must consult with the education setting/s being considered. It will be difficult to consult with nurseries, schools/colleges to be named in an EHC plan because of nurseries, school/college closures and fewer teachers being available.

Where possible we are naming a school and issuing a final EHCP, if the school confirms they can meet needs.

Will my child's Annual Review meeting still go ahead if the nurseries, schools and colleges remain closed?

The processes for annual review are likely to be significantly impacted by the current restrictions in place. It is understandable that many reviews meetings due in the summer term will not be possible if nurseries, schools and colleges remain closed.

It is expected that nurseries, schools and colleges will work with the Local Authority to rearrange annual review meeting dates when circumstances are clearer.

My child's Annual Review meeting has taken place and all the documentation has been sent to SENARS. Will there be a delay to the Local Authority's response as to whether they will amend or not amend my child's EHCP?

SENARs will use best endeavours to respond to submitted annual reviews documents. The Local Authority response will be determined by the information and evidence provided. If there is no evidence to suggest any changes then it is likely that the response will be to maintain the plan.

SENARS' officers will still write to parents to let them know the outcome of an annual review once it has been processed.

We will continue with our plans to amend the EHCPs to reflect the new funding arrangements and information on funding changes can be found [here](#).

Please note that all SENARS officers are working remotely and only have email access.

Is school transport still running?

If you cannot get your child to school yourself and they usually have transport provided by the Local Authority please contact the school or a member of the transport service.

It is worth remembering that things are not operating as they usually would. This means that the bus or taxi staff may not be the same ones your child is used to and pick up and drop off times may change.

Unfortunately the transport service will not be able to risk assess any new children at this time due to the social distancing regulations and will therefore not be able to

Please visit the [transport web-page](#) for further information.

Useful Links

The following are links/ resources to external organisations who have prepared information and advice about coronavirus for people with SEND and their parents and carers.

- [Mencap - Easy Read guide to coronavirus](#) (downloadable PDF - Adobe Reader required. You can [download it here](#))
- [National Autistic Society](#): guidance and helpline for parents, young people and staff
- [Place2Be](#): Guide to helping parents answer questions from their children and to support family wellbeing

- [Public Health England Advice on the coronavirus for places of education:](#) easy-read version (downloadable PDF - Adobe Reader required. You can [download it here](#))
- [Young Minds:](#) Talking to your child about coronavirus and 10 tips from their Parents Helpline to support family wellbeing
- [Council for Disabled Children:](#) extensive list of resources to support health and social care practitioners, children, young people, and families as well as the latest government guidance for professionals working across different settings during the COVID-19 outbreak.

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