**COVID-19 (Coronavirus) FAQs – Families**

**(SEN Team and SEND Advisory Service)**

**My child/young person has an Education, Heath and Care (EHC) Plan, do they have to attend school and if I choose to keep them at home will I get into trouble because of their attendance?**

No. You can choose whether to send your child/young person to school. Government guidance is to keep your child/young person from being in social contact with others. Schools will want to know if you are going to send your child/young person to school so that they can plan support. This may not be the usual support that your child/young person may have because staff may need to not be at school Attendance will not be affected if you choose to keep your child/young person at home at this time.

**What provision will be made for my child/young person if I choose not to send them to school?**

It is the school’s responsibility to ensure that there are activities available for all children/young people in their school. This will look different from individual to individual and school to school. The Local Authority are also working on some activities that can be completed at home that do not rely on the internet.

**If I change my mind and decide to send them into school can I?**

In theory yes, but it will be at the discretion of the school as to when this may be, as schools will be trying to have the right staff to support the children/young people that they know about.

**Will I still be able to contact my Special Educational Needs (SEN) Caseworker whilst my child**/young person **is not attending school?**

Yes. If you SEN Caseworker is able to work then you should be able to contact them either over the phone or via email. It is highly unlikely that the SEN Caseworkers will be in Kaleidoscope during this period. If you are unable to get a response directly from your SEN Caseworker, please contact SEN Duty on 020 3049 1475 or sen@lewisham.gov.uk.

**If my child/young person receives Local Authority transport to school will this still be provided?**

Yes. If the drivers and escorts are able to work then your child/young person will get to school. However, due to staffing the route, driver and escort maybe changed.

**My child/young person does not like change could they be in a classroom with a different teacher and different support staff, including 1:1?**

Yes. Schools want the best for all of their students. However, at this point in time they will be working with a significantly reduced number of staff and this could include your child/young person’s teacher/s and support staff. It could also include being taught in different classrooms and routines. Staff who know your child/young person will try and manage this to reduce anxiety, but this may not always be possible.

**Will the Therapies take place as outlined in the EHC Plan?**

At this current time it is unknown. Due to the lack of social contact it is unlikely that these will happen. However, Therapists are trying to think of ways that therapies could be delivered remotely and safely. Again, the Therapy teams are under a lot of pressure due to staff shortages and your child’s Therapist maybe absent from work.

**My child/young person attends an Alternative Provision, will these still be open?**

Currently most alternative provisions are staying open but this may include a shorter day or online tuition. It looks different for each provision. If you are not sure please contact them directly to find out.

**My child/young person has an EHC Plan and I am currently working with the SEN Team to find a change of placement for my child, will this continue?**

The Code of Practice usually has expectations that the SEN Team will consult new settings, schools and colleges in line with parent’s preference. Settings, Schools and Colleges must then respond to these consultations within 15 working days. However, there are also times when the Code of Practice knows that this cannot happen, such as Christmas Holidays, these are known as ‘exceptional’ times. This current time will be seen as an ‘exceptional’ time, so it is likely to happen until schools are fully open again.

**I am currently in the tribunal and/or mediation process, are these still happening?**

All mediations have been postponed or rearranged and will continue to do so until further notice. Tribunals are currently still going ahead but these are being done either as a paper exercise or, in some cases, video conferencing is being offered. However, decisions are likely to be delayed.

**Will I still be able to contact my school if I need to?**

Yes. However, each school may change the opening hours of their school office.

**COVID-19 (Coronavirus) FAQs – Schools (please also read families)**

**As a school we have been asked to offer an extended day for key workers, does this include students with an EHC Plan?**

No. It is for those families are that critical to the COVID-19 work force. This may include parents of children/young people with an EHC Plan, but not as a general rule.

**New submissions of EHC Needs Assessments, will these be accepted?**

Yes. However, the 20-week timeframe will not start until the SEN Team get notification to resume work as usual.

**With many parents choosing to keep their child/young person with an EHC Plan at home, do annual reviews have to be completed within the 1 year timeframe?**

Where possible this should be completed. Due to the social distancing guidance, this may be competed over the phone, FaceTime, WhatsApp Videoing, Skype, Zoom etc. If this is not possible, you will need to explain to the parent the reason why it will not be completed at this time and mutually agree a new date when the children are back at school.

**What do we do if we do not have capacity to support vulnerable children/young people?**

Try to minimise distress, anxiety and change for any children/young people that you know are going to find the change in situation challenging. Complete a risk assessment to demonstrate how an individual may be a challenge. Be honest with parents and state that, after completing a risk assessment, it may not be in the child/young person’s best interest to be at school and they may find it distressing with things being different. Be mindful that the government have stated that students with an EHC Plan can attend school. Get advice from relevant services who are available over the phone for advice. Continue to carry out your Behaviour Policy.

**Is there any responsibility on Local Authorities to keep monitoring vulnerable children/young people’s attendance?**

Yes. Ensuring that vulnerable children/young people remain protected is a top priority for the government. Local authorities have the key day-to-day responsibility for delivery of Children’s Social Care. Social Workers will continue to work with vulnerable children in this difficult period and should support these children to access this provision. Local authorities and education settings do not need to complete their usual day-to-day attendance processes to follow up on non-attendance. Education providers should, however, ensure they have a process in place to check on the welfare of any Child in Need who does not attend on any day.

**What is being done to help local authorities cope with all the extra work they might have to do, if lots of staff are sick or unable to work?**

Ofsted inspections have been paused, including to Children’s Services. The government has made available £1.6 billion to local authorities to help them respond to COVID-19 pressures across all the services they deliver, including their work with vulnerable children.

**What about meeting health and social care needs in an EHC Plan?**

Local authorities need to work with their Health and Social Care partners to ensure an individuals’ needs can continue to be met safely. This is particularly important for children/young people with complex medical and clinical nursing needs, and children/young people in care who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

**What should be done about infection control in educational settings for children/young people who have complex needs?**

We know that this is a worrying time for parents and staff working with children/young people with complex needs. It is important that decisions are made based on risk assessments – for both the child/young person and for the educational setting – and are informed by the latest Public Health and medical advice and guidance available. With support from government guidance and local partner agencies, leaders of educational settings are well-placed to make judgements about what is needed in their settings, and the government will support them in that.

**What if there are not enough staff in educational settings due to COVID-19?**

Local authorities will need to work closely with educational settings – and in particular special schools and other specialist provision – to ensure sufficient provision is available across the local area. Local authorities and educational settings may need to redeploy staff (whether teachers, support staff or other critical workers) to ensure specialist schools and colleges have sufficient workforce to operate safely, and may need to do this across the usual boundaries of maintained, academy, college or other status to ensure the right staff are in the right settings.

**How will local authorities and educational settings manage the financial impact of these changes?**

Funding for all schools (including maintained and academy special schools, non-maintained special schools, independent special schools, pupil referral units, and special post-16 institutions), whether from local or central government, will be maintained and not reduced because some or all pupils are not in attendance (either because of self-isolation, or where the institution has closed).

We will maintain Grant funding to FE colleges. They will continue to receive their existing adult education budget and 16 to 19 grant allocations, in the usual way.

The Department for Education (DFE) is considering amending SEND regulations to change timescales relating to EHC Plan processes.

Schools may face additional costs, as a result of COVID-19. We will put in place a new process that allows us to reimburse schools for exceptional costs that they face as a result. The DFE will discuss how best to deliver this funding with stakeholders over the next few days, and will publish details of the scheme shortly, but we trust that this will give Headteachers the reassurances they need, so that they are able to concentrate on their vital role in supporting the nation through this crisis.