



Update to parents and carers - Hillingdon SEND & Inclusion Service

Dear parents and carers,

Firstly, to start, we hope that you and your children are well and safe during this incredibly challenging time.

Although we are all working with many unknowns right now, we felt that it was important to provide you an update on our current position. Moving forward, the service will ensure that there is regular dialogue and updates throughout this period through our existing links with our schools, Hillingdon Parent Carer Forum, SENDIAS, HACS and The Local offer team.

Current Position

As of Monday 23rd March 2020, the government has asked that parents keep their children home, wherever possible and that education settings remain open only for the children of key workers critical to the COVID-9 response, and 'vulnerable children'.

Following government guidance, vulnerable children include children who are supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs, including child in need plans, on child protection plans, 'looked after' children, young carers, disabled children and those with education, health and care (EHC) plans. The majority of children with SEN, who receive SEN Support at school but do not have an EHC plan, would be expected to stay home unless they have a social worker or a parent or carer who is a key worker.

On Wednesday 25th March 2020, Vicky Ford, the Secretary of State for children and families, issued an open letter to children and young people with SEN, their parents/carers and families, and all others who support them.

In this letter, the Minister confirmed that:

*"[...] nurseries, schools, special schools, colleges and other training providers should **undertake a risk assessment** to establish the individual needs of each child or young person with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. This assessment should incorporate the views of the child or young person and their parents. This will inform the decision about whether they should continue in school or college, or whether their needs can be met at home safely.*

*If needs are best met at schools or colleges, we will support their school or college to meet their needs, wherever possible. For those on SEN support, schools, colleges and local authorities have discretion to use the same risk judgement to decide whether home or school is the safest setting for these children. It is, however, important that as many children as possible **remain at home** during this time in order to help reduce transmission rates."*



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Legal responsibilities under the current circumstances

During this outbreak, educational settings, local authorities, health bodies, parents and young people with SEND should work together to respond pragmatically and flexibly to each individual's needs.

The government [passed new legislation \(19 March\) in response to the outbreak](#). As a result, the absolute duty to make the provision in an EHC plan (section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014) may be temporarily amended to a '*reasonable endeavours*' duty, to ensure that provision continues to be available to meet education, health and care needs and prioritise their efforts to support those with the most complex needs, however this has not yet been enacted.

Local authorities will need to work closely with educational settings – and in particular, special schools and colleges, 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.

Parents who consent to changes to, or reductions in, their child's provision during this outbreak will not be considered to have agreed a permanent change to what their child needs in their EHC plan. We are also amending SEND regulations to change timescales relating to EHC plan processes.

The Department for Education will work closely with all local authorities to help them in this important role.

[Further information can be found here:](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>

To close, we'd like to stress our commitment to supporting you and your children throughout this extraordinary period and hope that we are able to work together, constructively and positively to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our children and young people at this time.

Yours sincerely,

Vikram Hansrani

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Parent/ Carer FAQs *(Please note - we will be regularly updating this section with your queries through the groups mentioned above)*

What should I do if I am a key worker and my child's nursery setting is closed?

Local authorities are following the government's advice and suggesting that parents should contact us if their child's setting is closed and we will help redirect you to an alternative provision wherever possible. Parents are asked to contact the Family Information Service directly (fis@hillingdon.gov.uk) to explain the situation and they will see if it is possible to find alternative childcare.

What support/ resources can parents/ carers receive whilst children are at home?

Hillingdon Educational Psychology Service is providing a helpline for any parent or carer of children, who feel they would benefit from a consultation with a psychologist to support them with any concerns arising at this time, for them or their families.

Area of concern you may wish to discuss may include:

- Anxiety around the current situation and its impact on your children and family;
- Supporting you to support your children's emotional needs;
- Concerns about friendships, learning, daily structure and activities;
- The impact of change, loss or bereavement;
- How to best look after yourself so you can look after your children.

The concerns can be related to school or family life.

If you would like to access this service, please email educationalpsychologyservice@hillingdon.gov.uk with the following information:

- Your name;
- The telephone number you would like to be contacted on;
- The name of your child's school;
- Times and dates you are not available for a consultation;
- A brief description of what you would like to focus on in the consultation.

We will aim to get back to you within two working days to confirm a date and time for your consultation.



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The consultation service will, as far as possible, be confidential.

The **Send Advisory Service** will be offering support to parents, of children and young people with SEND and the professionals that work with these families via an advice line. We can help with resources/activities or just general advice during these uncertain times.

You may wish to contact us to discuss the following:

- Resources or advice for children and young people with Autism
- Resources or advice for children and young people with sensory impairment difficulties
- Resources or advice for children and young people with other Special Educational Needs & Disabilities
- Fun activities for the whole family
- Activities to help keep children and young people who are attending educational settings engaged
- Support with successful risk assessing (educational settings)
- Sign-posting to existing council services

To access support, please email:

- sasinclusion@hillington.gov.uk who specialise in providing support for children and young people aged 2 and above
- saskeyworking@hillington.gov.uk who specialise in providing whole family guidance and support
- sassensory@hillington.gov.uk who specialise in providing support for children and young people with sensory impairment difficulties

Please provide us with the following information:

- Your name and the telephone number you would like to be contacted on;
- The name of your child's school;
- Times and dates you are not available;
- A brief description of the type of support/advice that you need

We are uncertain of the demand for this type of support however; we aim to get back to you within 24 hours.

What if my child requires healthcare and/or social provision based on their EHCP?

The SEND & Inclusion service are currently working with healthcare providers to ensure the therapists are supporting parents and carers with the education component of the EHC



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Plan. The Children's Integrated Therapy Service (CITS) is offering phone/video contact to deliver therapy including Language Link to parent portal and phone call health reviews.

More details are on: www.cnwl.nhs.uk and www.facebook.com/CNWLNHSFT.

The SEND service are also liaising with social care services who are working with schools supporting risks assessments where appropriate. All services and short break provisions continue to be in place, however some parents have requested packages to be suspended due to current government guidance. Please note that all allocated workers offer regular contact with families and each case is being reviewed jointly with parents and professionals.

What will happen if my child is currently going through the Education, Health and Care Needs assessment (EHCNA) process?

The Minister's open letter suggests that the government will be seeking to amend regulations on the timescales for EHCP processes where this is appropriate because of COVID-19, however as of yet, nothing has been confirmed. On a practical basis, the Local Authority will be working to comply with deadlines, however this may be hampered due to staffing absence.