

SEND

NEWSLETTER

June 2020

Dear parents and carers,

We hope that you and your families are staying well and that you are coping as best as possible with the additional pressures that Covid 19 has brought. We recognise that it is a very difficult time for parents and carers of children with SEND, and that the move away from lockdown may be particularly challenging.

Throughout the crisis, we in the SEND Team have continued to work and have prioritised essential work including completing EHC needs assessments and producing EHC plans. Though we are having to work differently (mostly at home, using Microsoft Teams, emails and telephone as the standard means of communication), we are trying to continue to operate an effective service.

As part of our efforts to stay in touch and keep people advised of developments, we have created this new SEND Newsletter, which we hope you will find informative and helpful. Going forward our aim is to produce and circulate a newsletter every 2 months and we would like your feedback.

Please do let us know what you would like to see in the newsletter, what issues would you want addressing, what questions would you want answered and also just your general feedback, is the newsletter too long or too short for example? We are really keen to hear your views so that we can produce a newsletter that is readable and helpful. Please tell us what you think, and we will listen and develop future newsletters accordingly.

SEND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT



New Staff

As part of improving the SEND Service we welcome Dennis Scotland who has joined us as a Head of Service with the role of improving operational delivery. Dennis now has responsibility for Transport and Statutory Assessments and will work alongside Nathan Jones to ensure the service develops and improves.

In addition to Dennis four other new members of staff have/are being recruited to help the service make the developments that will ensure you and your children get a better service.

FUNDING NEWS



Family Fund

Helping disabled children

Family Fund Grant - £37.3 Million is Now Available for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in England

The Family Fund Grant has been set up by central government to support families who have children with complex needs and disabilities

Those who apply for, are eligible and receive grants will be able to buy equipment to help improve their child's life while implementing social distancing measures e.g. computers, specialist equipment and educational toys. As part of this new national funding, £10million has been specifically committed in response to the difficulties presented by the coronavirus pandemic, helping parents to educate and look after disabled or critically ill children who are staying at home more than usual.

This Family Fund will provide grants of around £400-£500 per family depending on need. The grants are aimed at helping low-income families with seriously ill or disabled children with the cost of equipment, goods or services - from washing machines and refrigerators to sensory and educational equipment that they might not otherwise be able to afford.

Application details are available on the Family Fund website

<https://www.familyfund.org.uk/FAQs/how-do-we-apply>

SCHOOLS

Re-opening of Schools

Many of your children will have continued to attend school throughout the Covid 19 crisis and the government have further announced that all schools should now start re-opening to a wider group of children from 1st June. Understandably there is some anxiety about this and so all schools are currently planning to ensure it happens in a safe and fair way.

Regarding SEND and Special Schools the Government has issued a specific update:

- From 1 June, all special schools to welcome back more children
- From 1 June, at the earliest, primary schools to welcome back children in Nursery, YR, Y1 and Y6, alongside priority groups.
- From 15 June, at the earliest, secondary schools, sixth form and FE colleges to offer some face-to-face support to supplement the remote education of Y10 and Y12 students, alongside the full-time provision they are offering to priority groups.

Eveleen Riordan, Assistant Director, Schools and Learning, is meeting regularly with Head Teachers to agree the plans for the wider return of schools, including development of risk assessments, and parents will be advised directly of the situation for their child by their child's school.

Government guidance links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>

and

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

Exams and Grades

Exams have been cancelled for 2020 and other plans put in place to give pupils, parents, and teachers certainty, and free up schools and colleges to focus on supporting vulnerable children and the children of key workers. For information, please contact your school, see the link below for the Government guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020#history>

Risk Assessments

As children and young people are phased back into education, all those already offered places in schools during lockdown, will, following a risk assessment, continue to be offered places.

Educational settings may decrease the use of risk assessments for young people who have returned to class but will need to keep them updated for young people remaining at home or only partially accessing the educational setting. When updating risk assessments consideration must be given to the level of care that parent carers have been giving over a long period and how sustainable this is. The local authority and educational settings are asked to be mindful of the level of access to respite and short breaks services, the loss of care from extended family, and the risks to health of caring week round for children and young people with complex needs.

For more information about risk assessments the Government's full guidance can be accessed through the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-send-risk-assessment-guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-send-risk-assessment-guidance>

The government is constantly updating its guidance, and we will endeavour to upload the latest guidance as quickly as possible onto our SEND Local offer website.



Safe School Transport

At our consultation event in February parents understandably questioned having to complete an annual form for SEND transport. You should now have received a letter advising you of a new system which means you do not need to do this anymore, where circumstances haven't changed. We have picked up other improvement actions from the consultation event and are now working through the detail. Over the next few months, we would like to carry on working with you to get these actions in place.

During the current crisis Haringey SEND transport service continues to work closely with schools to ensure children are supported to get to school safely. If you use the SEND transport service, your child will continue to get transport as they did so before the crisis if it is safe for them to do so. Work is underway to ensure the buses can try and reduce risk e.g. by implementing social distancing rules. Further, each provider has been issued with Safer transport guidance to ensure the safety of children, parents, and staff. This of course will mean fewer children on more vehicles. Every effort is being made to try ensure that where possible the same travel escorts work with the same children in order to try and further reduce risk and each staff member will be issued with Personal Protective Equipment, PPE, and will have a personal risk assessment in place. A copy of the guidance can be provided on request. Please see below the link for information.

https://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/send_transport_safer_travel.pdf

EHCPs

Processes During Current Covid 19 Restrictions



Assessments for EHCPs

Despite Covid 19 the team are still taking requests, from parents and schools for EHC assessments and if the EHCP process is already underway where possible it will continue. On the 30th April, the government announced temporary regulations to relax the timescales that apply to EHC plan processes. These regulations state that if for a reason related to Covid 19 it is not possible to meet one of the normal time limits, the local authority (or health or other body involved) will have to complete the process as soon as reasonably practicable instead. This change took effect on 1 May and lasts until 25 September. It is important to note that this change does not mean EHC plan processes are different from before. Nor does it mean that they are going to stop. All the usual elements of the process must happen, including involving you and your child, but things may take longer than usual. Haringey intends to stick to the normal time limits as closely as possible and will advise individual parents when this is not possible and give you a revised timescale.

If a different school is named in an EHC plan during the Covid 19 period, that school must still admit your child by adding them to the school roll. They should then consider them in the same way as existing pupils and do a risk assessment to see if they should offer them a place in school now or support their education at home for the time-being.

Reports by professionals will be done based on existing knowledge of a child and through contact by phone and video conferencing e.g. Zoom or Teams etc. Educational Psychologists will use a consultation approach, talking to parents, school and in some cases the child or young person. It will be noted on new EHCPs that the reports were written during the Covid 19 period and where necessary they may be amended later.

However, unfortunately, during this time there will not be a co-production meeting. The casework officer will prepare a draft plan based on all the advices which will go to SEN Panel and then be sent to you, the school and professionals who provided information for the plan.

You will then get a call to talk through the draft plan and you will be able to comment and ask for changes as you would have done at a co-production meeting. You and your child will still be actively involved in the process, but it will be in a slightly different way to the norm.

Your SEN case worker will let you know if there are any delays and keep you updated. Please note, reports by professionals may have to be done based on existing knowledge of a child but where possible they will try and do some assessment by phone or video link. Our aim remains that you and your child should still be actively involved in the process.

Annual Reviews of EHCPs

The Coronavirus Emergency legislation has given Local Authorities (LAs) and Schools some flexibility regarding the deadlines for Annual Reviews. Summer term annual reviews may be postponed, although some schools are already using telephone and video conferencing to carry out some of these reviews.

If you feel there is an urgent need to amend the provision or placement in your child or young person's EHC Plan, please speak to us and the school and we will consider what review mechanisms could be put in place at this time.



PERSONAL BUDGETS

Flexible Use of Direct Payments and Personal Budgets During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Due to Covid 19 we have temporarily adopted a more flexible approach to the use of direct payments. COVID-19 is an exceptional circumstance, and we understand that it is vital that those people who take their budget as a direct payment, continue to receive the support they require to keep their children safe, healthy and well.

As far as possible, direct payments should continue to be used as agreed within the care and support plan, however, we recognise that there may be circumstances during the current crisis

where this is not possible, e.g. through staff absence. We have developed detailed guidance regarding this, please use the link to access this guidance from our website.

https://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/a1_apr_2020_direct_payment_guidance_covid-19_amendment.pdf

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT



Amaze

As you will know we have been trying to improve parental involvement in developing the SEND offer and systems and we engaged an organisation called Amaze to help us do this. Amaze were commissioned to undertake a review of parent participation in Haringey and report on their findings. The report has been delayed due to Covid 19 but Amaze are now close to completing the first draft of the report

As part of a final consultation process Amaze will be hosting two online stakeholder meetings on Wednesday 24th June 2020. Amaze are keen that the final report and recommendations are fully reflective and representative of the views of the stakeholders (including parents) who participated in the consultation process for this report. Getting further input into the plan at this time is an important part of the process to ensure that the plan really helps develop better parental engagement regarding SEND in Haringey.

The two online meetings will be open to all those who participated in the focus groups, the survey or who were engaged in a telephone interview (and who provided their contact details for follow up) and will be held via Zoom. The meetings will involve mixed groups of parents, carers and professionals and at the meeting several mixed breakout groups will occur to ensure the meeting gives parents and carers more opportunity to contribute to the discussion regarding the final report and recommendations. The themes raised at these breakout groups will be gathered and will be incorporated in the final report. All parents will be emailed a copy of the final report and it will also be published online.

To register your interest and to receive joining instructions, please email: info@amazesussex.org.uk

If you wish to register you will need to advise Amaze of your full name and your preferred timeslot and if you could please let them know if you have any support needs regarding accessing the meeting. Timeslots are:

- Session 1 - 24th June: 9.30am to 11.30 am
- or
- Session 2 - 24th June: 7.00 pm to 9.00 pm.

Once you have registered Amaze will email you a draft, confidential and embargoed summary of the findings and recommendations a week before the meeting, along with details of how the session will run.

We appreciate that it may not be easy for everyone to commit time to meetings in the current circumstances, but Amaze are very keen to ensure that their findings reflect all views as they will drive future developments in parental/carer involvement in Haringey SEND services. To aid this Amaze are offering two sessions on the 24th to ensure there is some flexibility for parents.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact Haringey SEND Service or Sally from Amaze at sallyp@amazesussex.org.uk

PLEASE HELP US HELP YOU

We hoped you have enjoyed this newsletter and that you will take the opportunity to feedback to us and advise us regarding the content of future newsletters. If you have comments please email me, Dennis Scotland or Nathan Jones at:

Dennis.Scotland@Haringey.gov.uk

Nathan.Jones@Haringey.gov.uk

Thank you

Dennis Scotland, Nathan Jones and the Haringey SEND Service