

Information for Parents and Carers on the temporary changes to SEND provision in Bury

18 May 2020

Introduction

As you know the outbreak of Coronavirus across the country has led to many changes for us all that we are having to adapt to. It has meant that our normal routines have been affected and for children and young people with SEND this can be particularly difficult. We know that this is a difficult and worrying time for all parents and carers and so we want to be as clear as possible about how the current crisis and some changes to regulations that have been introduced nationally and these are being applied in Bury.

The situation is changing on a daily basis and so we will try and keep you updated as changes arise through the Local Offer, Bury2Gether and the Information and Advice Service (IASS).

Temporary changes to the carrying out, delivery and review of Education, Health and Care needs assessments and plans.

The Government has announced a number of temporary changes to the law in relation to EHC assessments, the delivery of SEND provision described in EHC plans and the annual review process. More details of these changes can be found by following this link which gives the guidance, the legislative changes and key implications. The implications of these changes and how we are implementing them in Bury is detailed below.

[Changes to the law on education, health and care needs assessments and plans due to coronavirus - GOV.UK](#)

EHC Assessments

There is no change in relation to the Local Authorities duty to carry out EHC assessments. Although there is some easing of timescales. These rules came into place on 1st May 2020 and will be in place until 25th September 2020. Educational settings and parents are still able to request an education, health and care needs assessment in the normal way. Educational settings will continue to be expected to provide evidence of the child or young person's needs and demonstrate that they have put appropriate provision in place. The SEND panel is meeting weekly and will consider all requests made.

Once an assessment is underway, we will endeavour to ensure that you and your child/young person is kept at the centre of the assessment and that your views are heard.

Unfortunately it will be more difficult for other professionals to see and assess your child than it would be in normal times. This could be for a variety of reasons for example some staff not being in work because of sickness or other

circumstances; health staff working in frontline services; professionals not being able to undertake face to face assessments. It may therefore take a little more time to collect all the evidence that we need. However we are committed to ensuring that we do complete assessments as quickly as we are able to and if there are delays that we keep you informed. We want to ensure that children and young people who need additional support get this as quickly as possible.

Temporary changes to the delivery of SEND provision in EHC plans

These changes came into place on 1st May 2020 and apply to the 31st May 2020, currently we do not know if these are to be extended. The changes are in relation to the responsibility of the Local Authority to use 'reasonable endeavours' to deliver the special educational provision set out in EHC plans. In current circumstances this means that this provision has to be delivered in different ways. We know that schools are working closely with parents in relation to the ongoing education of children even when they are not in school. To ensure that this is working we intend to carry out the following steps:

1. A team from the Local Authority will contact the family of every child/young person with an EHC plan to discuss the changes to education during the current crisis and to talk about any worries you have and identify any issues that are arising from this.
2. We will then contact early year's settings, schools and colleges to provide feedback to them about these conversations and any issues that have been raised.
3. We will work with educational settings to find solutions to any issues that are arising.
4. We will share good practice with schools through our SENCO network meetings.
5. We will coordinate the sharing of information with professionals involved with your child/young person across health, social care and education.
6. We will review the provision across the Borough to identify any gaps and to find new or different ways of supporting children during this crisis.

The guidance from the DFE gives some examples of alternative arrangements that might be put in place during this crisis these include:

- Alterations to the frequency and timing of the delivery of provision in school, e.g. moving to a part-time timetable.
- A temporary placement in another school – mainstream or special, with the agreement of the parent or young person.
- Attendance at a local hub.
- Video class sessions for children to keep in touch with classmates and teaching staff.
- Home learning reading programme, provided by the SENCO, reviewed weekly.
- Specialist SEN Teachers providing advice and support to parents re autism, visual or hearing impairment or literacy.
- A SaLT delivering sessions via video link.
- An OT video linking to a child's home and modelling exercises that the parents could do with their child.

Of course delivery of these alternatives are dependent on other factors such as the availability and capacity of specialist staff, the ability of schools to provide home learning programmes etc. The situation is of course changing quickly and the individual conversations will help us to understand the needs across Bury.

Reviews of EHC plans

Reviews of EHC plans continue to take place, educational settings have been advised to continue to hold annual reviews, although of course they will be held virtually. Our SENCO's are telling us that this seems to be working well, but if you do have any concerns about this please speak to the SENCO in the first place.

Educational settings have been advised to ensure that child/young person's voice and that of their parent or carer must continue to be at the centre of the process and that your views must be encouraged and recorded.

It may not be possible for all professionals to be present at the virtual review or provide a report, so if you feel that all the information has not been collected then please flag this up with the setting and this can then be picked up at a later date.

Settings have been advised to send in their annual review paperwork and although there has been a temporary relaxation in the timescales for the Local Authority to respond to the annual review. We will strive to complete the process as quickly as possible.

If you need further information or advice about any of the issues raised in this briefing then you can contact the SEN team who are currently working from home but are available via senteam@bury.gov.uk or

Contact the Information Advice Support Service (IASS) via the link below:
[Bury SENDiass | Barnardo's](#)