

SNAS Covid-19

This guidance note should be read in conjunction with the government's official guidance on vulnerable children and young people. This 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>

As a service, we are committed to ensuring that our children with special educational needs and disabilities continue to be supported during the current circumstances as a result of the virus outbreak.

Contacting SNAS

Following the government's advice to socially distance, the team are working remotely until further notice. We are successfully using a range of technology to hold virtual meetings and access information and reports to inform our work.

If you have an enquiry please email to SNASparents@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk. If you would like to speak with a member of the Service over the phone, please email your contact details, convenient times/dates for us to call and brief details of your enquiry. A member of the team will get back to you as soon as possible.

New requests for statutory assessment of a young person's Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs.

During these challenging times, we will be following government advice and continuing to process requests for EHC assessments. For new assessment requests the information submitted will be considered and outcomes communicated with parents/carers within the 6 week timeframe as usual. Schools and parents should email requests and accompanying evidence to the EHCA requests email address. We will not be able to access hard copies received by post.

EHC assessments currently in progress

Where a child's or young person's assessment has already been agreed we will endeavour to complete the process within the 20 week timeframe. We know that there may be delays where, for example, it may not be possible to carry out an assessment by a paediatrician or an educational psychologist. The government has acknowledged this by stating that it will be 'amending SEND regulations to change the timescales relating to EHC plan processes' (COVID-19: guidance on vulnerable children and young people updated on 25th March). Specific details of this have not yet been announced, so in the meantime we will continue to process EHC assessments where we have already received the necessary information and with any further reports received.

School attendance for children and young people with EHC Plans

All pupils with an EHC Plan are eligible to attend school, however parents/carers may decide that it is in the child's best interests for them to remain at home given the government's advice on social distancing and shielding, especially for children and young people with medical needs. If you are keeping your child at home for their

wellbeing or concerns about potential exposure to infection, then your child's school place will be maintained.

The government has passed new legislation in response to the outbreak. As a result, local authorities have been advised to use “reasonable endeavours 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”.

We are in close contact with our schools and will make every effort to ensure that provision is available for eligible pupils, and we will discuss with parents and carers on an individual basis what support may be available for their child when we are aware of school closures.

Provision for children and young people with EHCPs

The expectation is that the provision described in a child's EHC Plan will continue to be delivered as far as is possible and practicable. However, given the social distancing rules and current staffing challenges that all schools are facing, there are likely to be changes and schools will be doing their best to ensure that children are supported, and that impact is minimised. In particular, therapy teams will be working with schools to try and meet the needs of individuals but this may be impacted by reduced staff or if NHS staff are directed to cover other duties. Many schools are setting online work, delivering virtual lessons and have resources and guidance available on their websites. We recommend discussing appropriate home learning resources with your child's school.

Any changes or reductions to a child's or young person's provision during the outbreak will not be considered as a permanent change to what is described in their EHC Plan.

Annual Reviews

SNAS depends on information from schools and professionals in order to review and amend EHC Plans. The government has temporarily disapplied the duty for LAs to annually review EHCPs but we will encourage schools to electronically gather and share reports and views amongst the family and professionals and to hold a virtual team around the child meeting where this is possible. We appreciate that some schools and families are better skilled and equipped to do this than others and acknowledge that some reviews will need to be delayed will ask schools to prioritise reviews where there is a forthcoming transition eg for children in their nursery year, in year 5 and year 11.