



www.blackpoollocaloffer.co.uk

Email: send@blackpool.gov.uk

Call: 01253 476602

Blackpool Council's Local Offer

Giving children and young people and families with special educational needs or disabilities information and support services within their local area.

Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Blackpool

Quarterly Newsletter 2 – April 2020

As promised, this is the second of our now quarterly SEND Newsletters. Back in January, when we started these, I never imagined that I would be writing about the impact of a global pandemic. There is lots of information to share.

Firstly, may I say thank you to all the parents, carers and providers who supported Blackpool Parents Forum at their event on 11th March, at Blackpool Football Ground. There were some interesting speakers and lots of information shared. Thank you to Colin Earnshaw and Hilary Ainge for all the work they do to co-ordinate our joint work with parents. We managed some interesting data gathering on the day using a mobile app for online voting. Thank you for your views. We are taking note of these and continually working on improving what we do. It was heart-warming to meet so many motivated people whose common goal was to support families impacted by special educational needs. Thank you.

Now to the most important aspect of this newsletter: Coronavirus - Covid19 and how it has changed how we are working:

Corona Kindness

Blackpool Council have set up a [Corona Kindness](#) team who have received several hundred emails either asking for help or offering help. The team has now started to roll out a range of services including food shopping, provision of medical supplies and dog-walking.

The 12 community hubs established last week are each looking to produce a list of local shops that are willing to provide home delivery services and the team is working with private sector operators to develop delivery rounds for essential items such as milk, cheese and eggs.

More than 70,000 leaflets promoting the Corona Kindness helpline are being delivered to every household in Blackpool.

It is anticipated that the distribution team will have completed the deliveries over the next few days.

Those who can offer support or in need of help can use one of two email addresses:

helpneeded@blackpool.gov.uk or helpoffered@blackpool.gov.uk. Those in need of help can also call a dedicated hotline on 0808 196 3080. Please do not feel alone at this time.

Education Health and Care Plans - until further notice, we are continuing with the statutory timescales as usual. This means that all assessments currently underway will be handled within the 20 weeks as planned (staff illness and virus complications permitting). We will continue to work with parents, settings and schools who submit a request for assessment, however, the use of technology will be encouraged wherever possible to maintain social distancing. You are still able to contact the team by email: send@blackpool.gov.uk or by phone on: 01253 476602. Please get in contact if you wish to know more about your child's case. Over the next few days, you may receive (or have already received) a contact call from one of the SEND Officers at Blackpool.

Advisory Teachers for Early Years and School Age Children: The Coronavirus outbreak means that parents and carers of young people with SEND are facing uncertainty. We know settings/schools are on the front line and are playing a hugely important role in keeping communities going in these challenging times. If your child is not able to attend their setting/school, we want to be able to support you with some practical home learning advice, hints and suggestions. The Advisory Teachers are working remotely but are still contactable by settings/schools. They are also working to find helpful resources for children and settings/schools during the current crisis and are keen to be engaged with you should you require help in anyway. Please contact them by email: inclusions.team@blackpool.gov.uk.

Blackpool Local Offer - the website is being updated regularly with useful information. However, following feedback and a request by parents, the main area of up to date news and information is being posted on Facebook - please follow Blackpool Local Offer - for useful resources, information and links to useful websites. The Local Offer website is: www.blackpoollocaloffer.co.uk. Again, should you require a resource on a particular area, you are able to message the Local Offer website or Facebook page and the Advisory teachers will create a link to a website or resource and help you.

The FYI directory in Blackpool - www.fyidirectory.co.uk has a link to all local shops, including food suppliers, who are delivering within the local community. This should help everyone minimise journeys out of the house.

I am very concerned about everyone's health and welfare during this very difficult time and Diane Booth (Director of Children's Services) and I are keen to communicate our desire to reach out and support all of our Blackpool families - particularly those who are impacted with special educational needs or disabilities - and to let them know we are here and are ready to support you - whilst obviously also following the rules of social distancing.

I can't stress enough that, especially as the warmer weather approaches, we all need to continue with the Government's advice of "stay at home, protect the NHS, save lives." Hand hygiene continues to be a priority too - so please keep washing your hands.

Whilst there is lots to concern all of us, I recognise that many parents are using this as an opportunity to help their children. I have been delighted to hear of so many inspirational parents who are home educating to the highest of standards. You are doing an amazing job! Thank you for everything you are doing.

Please stay safe and well.

Yours sincerely

Phil Thompson
Head of SEND