

Information for Parent/Carers on SEND processes during COVID 19

Dear Parents/Carers,

We wanted to take an opportunity to write to you, as you know we are currently all trying to manage in very difficult and challenging times. We understand that for parents, carers, children and young people, having a significant break in school routines can cause anxiety and stress. We thank you all for continuing to work with us as we try to ensure that everyone remains safe and well whilst we are following guidance from central government.

We are all continuing to work hard and are committed to children with special educational needs and/or disabilities in this difficult time. All services across Access and Inclusion are changing their usual ways of service delivery as the national picture changes. We are committed to maintaining our support and provision albeit delivered in different ways.

The Government advice about Coronavirus (Covid 19) is that all council staff must work from home if they can. We are continuing to work with schools and others to support vulnerable children and young people and children of key workers. The Education Health and Care team, Educational Psychology Service and Sensory Impairment Service, Special Educational Needs Advisory Service are in regular contact with parent/carers, schools and other professionals.

Please see below for some details of how we will continue with our essential work:

SEN Panels – Trafford Assessment Panel (TAP) and Moderation and Resources (MAR) Panel

We have continued to run our SEN panels on the usual timetable but through virtual platforms to ensure that we are able to keep within timescales. We have therefore taken decisions to agree to carry out Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments and we are notifying parent/carers of these decisions.

EHC Needs Assessments

We will prioritise completing EHC needs assessment and producing EHC plans. We will continue to work to legal deadlines where possible.

Professionals will continue to provide advice towards EHC needs assessments. They will do this using their knowledge of the child or young person. They will also speak with other professionals about the children and young people. Their reports will be sent by email. We will use telephone/virtual platforms where appropriate to gain more information. The advice that is collected may be different than we would provide under normal circumstances but we will make our best efforts to provide up to date advice.

It may be necessary in some instances to update this advice once the guidelines on social distancing are lifted and we will discuss this with parent/carers on a case by case basis.

Co-production of EHC Plans

We will not be able to have usual co-production outcomes meetings with parent/carers as we would normally as part of the Educational Psychology Advice process but we will attempt to use technology where possible to co-produce outcomes. Once all the information has been gathered we will follow the usual process of presenting this to the Moderation and Resources Panel who will decide on whether a plan will be issued.

The EHC Co-ordinator will then write a draft plan and send this out to parent/carers. We will contact the family by phone to explain the contents of the plan. They will also ask families for their views and for any amendments they would like to see. Families can also email their comments to us. School staff and professionals will provide their views through online documents, phone or email. We will consider all amendments requested. We will then issue a final EHC plan in the usual way.

Annual Review meetings

Where possible we will support schools holding a review through virtual meetings, by telephone or video. Examples of video applications are Zoom, Microsoft teams or Facetime. However we understand that there may be occasions where this is not possible and it might be preferable to postpone an annual review meeting that was due to take place in the summer term. If annual reviews are postponed we will make every effort to ensure that they take place as soon as we are able to return to usual ways of working.

Funding of Education Health and Care Plans

As directed by central government, all funding of EHCPs will remain the same even if children and young people are not accessing settings.

We are working closely with schools and staff to ensure that families are continuing to access as much support as possible in a safe way and we are open to working creatively with families while we are expected to follow social distancing guidance. Staff employed to support children and young people will be engaged in related activities either in preparing resources, completing continuing professional development tasks or working with /liaising with families and individuals. We recognise that at this point we do not know how long children and young people will be away from school and that any lengthy break may be result in a change of need once schools open as usual.

Any changes in need will be addressed through the usual processes once children and young people return to normal school routines, such as through calling reviews with school staff and any other appropriate professionals. This is so the needs of the child/young person are well understood and there are clear recommendations regarding appropriate provision to meet the change in need.

Trafford Travel and Co-ordination Unit

Trafford Travel Coordination Unit (TTCU) continue to provide travel assistance to all eligible children, young people and adults who still require the service. We have worked closely with contractors and passenger assistants to apply social distancing measures where possible, for example by spacing pupils out on the vehicles and using larger vehicles if they are available but please be aware that this is not always possible. We also have a smaller team as around 35% of our passenger assistants are not currently able to work because they are self isolating due to their age or health conditions. Some passengers have not required transport every day and there are examples of parents carers who have temporarily chosen to transport their own children to school. All these factors have resulted in us having to be flexible so we can continue to transport everyone that needs the service and we would like to thank parent carers for their understanding when passenger assistants and route times have had to be changed. If you have any queries about travel assistance, please call 0161 912 5055 and leave a message and one of the team will call you back.

Children and Young People with EHCPs in Schools and Settings

Access and Inclusion services are working with all Trafford schools and closely with health and social care teams to ensure that children with EHCPs are in school if absolutely necessary and are receiving as much SEND provision as possible and are safe if they remain at home.

Children and Young People with EHCPs not in Schools and Settings

The EHC Team are mindful that some children with an EHCP may not be on a school roll at present. We are ensuring that we keep in touch with families by checking in with them on a regular basis and where possible providing suitable access to learning opportunities.

For children who are being home schooled (Elective Home Education) with an EHCP parent/carers can access the local offer page for useful links to resources to support delivery of the curriculum.

Children and Young People with EHCPs in Out of Borough schools

The EHC Team have contacted all out of borough independent schools to ensure that we are kept up to date about what provision is being offered to children and young people who attend these settings. We are also liaising closely with social care and health colleagues to ensure that children and young people are kept safe and that appropriate provision is in place.

Trafford SEND Information Advice and Support Service

The service continues to be available to support parent carers children and young people with their SEND related queries. Please call the helpline 0161 912 3150 between 9am and 12 noon Monday to Friday or email sendiass@trafford.gov.uk for free impartial and confidential information, advice and support.

Due to current restrictions we are unable to offer face to face meetings but we are available for virtual meetings using platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom. Useful information and resources are regularly being posted on our Facebook page – please visit and like Trafford SENDIASS to get the latest updates and information.

CONTACTS

If you require further information or advice the following contact details may be useful:

Education Health and Care Team	Tel 07971014436 EHCSchools@trafford.gov.uk
Educational Psychology Service	TraffordEPS@trafford.gov.uk
Special Educational Needs Advisory Service	sally.smith@trafford.gov.uk
Trafford Sensory Impairment Service	tsiss@trafford.gov.uk
Trafford SENDIASS	Tel 0161 912 3150 sendiass@trafford.gov.uk
Trafford Travel and Co-ordination Unit	Tel 0161 912 5055 ttcu@trafford.gov.uk