

Frequently Asked Questions from Southwark families regarding SEND provision for children and young people in response to Covid-19

1) The SENCo at my child's school advised that there will be no Annual Review of the EHCP until the next key stage, is this true and if so why?

The timing of the Annual Review remains the same unless for reasons related to COVID 19 the review has had to be delayed. If the SENCo has stated the review is delayed, the reasons need to be clearly explained. The LA (local authority) has issued guidance to schools about this which sits alongside the national guidance and temporary legislation which you can find via the following link: [Education, Health and Care needs assessments and plans: guidance on temporary legislative changes relating to coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

2) Will there be any changes around applying for an EHC (Education, Health and Care) needs assessment during this time?

Possibly. The LA is still receiving assessment requests from schools, parents and other professionals in the same way as usual. However, the LA can use a timeline exception to the usual 20 weeks if the assessment cannot be completed due to a reason related to COVID 19.

This temporary legislation remains in force until 25th September 2020. All links to this and national guidance for families are on Southwark's Local Offer and can also be found via the following link: [Education, Health and Care needs assessments and plans: guidance on temporary legislative changes relating to coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

3) My child will enter year 6 in September, I need to see Secondary schools, how do I do this?

Most schools are still planning to hold Open Days from September so you should be able to carry out visits. Arrangements may be subject to change so we would recommend checking the website of schools ahead of visits. This should contain details of alternative arrangements in the event that visits are not possible.

You can also visit the Local Offer website for additional information to assist you with making your choice of school <https://localoffer.southwark.gov.uk/education/> and for impartial advice you can contact the SIAS (Southwark Information, Advice and Support) team <https://localoffer.southwark.gov.uk/information-advice-and-support/support-services/sias/>

4) I have been told that assessing for EHCPs has stopped and will not change when schools go back, is this true?

This is not the case. Please see question 2 above. Schools and families can apply for assessment in the usual way.

5) My child has one-to-one support in school, how can school provide this while social distancing? My child is non-verbal and does not understand social distancing.

For each child with an EHCP the school must undertake a risk assessment to see if that child can safely come into school and what adaptations need to be made to facilitate this. If this is not possible due to the high risk this may pose, then the school needs to look at the provision that can be made and how this will be delivered at home. This includes virtual learning, sending work home, telephone and email contact to see how things are going (a full list is in the national guidance):

[Education, Health and Care needs assessments and plans: guidance on temporary legislative changes relating to coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

It is possible to have some children in school who require 1-to-1 and maintain social distancing but this very much depends on each school's staffing, the building and the child's individual needs. This will all be factored into the risk assessment.

6) My child should start college in September, what will happen if college doesn't open? Who will give my son education?

It is fully expected that colleges will be open in September so long as the infection rates in the community remain low. If the college named in your child's EHCP does not open then they will need to make arrangements for your son's education at home. This must be following a full risk assessment and they must set out how the provision in his plan will be delivered. However, it is very unlikely this will be necessary.

7) My child requires Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy reports, can this be done in time for my next review?

This may not be possible if those reports are expected to be written by health professionals employed in the NHS. Many therapists have been diverted from their usual roles to work with COVID patients. If this is the case the review can be delayed and there is a process for this in the temporary legislation. [Education, Health and Care needs assessments and plans: guidance on temporary legislative changes relating to coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

8) Have annual reviews stopped?

No and as many as possible should continue to be carried out even if virtual meetings are held. It is now possible to delay a review under the Temporary Legislation though. Please see point no.1 above.

9) My child travels to school in a taxi with driver, helper and another child and cannot social distance, can my child have their own taxi?

The Travel Assistance service does not have the capacity for every child to have their own taxi, however, schools are carrying out individual risk assessments before offering places to children and family circumstances and transport are taken into account.

When children travel in taxis, all staff must wear PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), including masks and gloves, thereby protecting children. Passenger Assistants will only travel if required because of the children's ages or needs.

10) What safety measures have been put in place for school transport buses?

Buses are only taking a maximum of four children and one passenger assistant. Children are individually taken onto the bus to be seated and social distancing on the buses is in place. Children sit away from each other and all other seats are taped up, so that a child cannot sit down on them when getting on the bus, they all have their allotted seats and sit in the same one every day.

Whilst we do not currently require the children to wear masks, the crews must wear PPE, including masks and gloves and they have sanitiser to wipe down seats and clean hands.

Wherever possible crews remain the same every day and are only changed if the crew members have to be off work for any reason.

All buses are cleaned daily, as per the usual cleaning routine, but in addition fumigation takes place every evening. This extra measure is done after the afternoon rounds have completed, so that children and crew are not on the bus again until the fumigating chemicals have dispersed.

On arrival at schools, crews follow the school protocol, which usually means that each child is taken off the bus one at a time, with the others remaining on the bus whilst this takes place. Sufficient levels of crew are available to look after the children until this process is finished.

11)My child is not in school at the moment and has tutors, used to go to the library but can't now because it is shut. What will happen? He needs an education!

For situations like this that are very individual we will find a way forward. Most tuition sessions are being delivered virtually. If concerns remain please contact your EHCP Coordinator in the first instance.

12)My child goes to Saturday sports club but it is shut. What can they have instead?

Some services will have been suspended for safety reasons. If your child is entitled to receive Short Breaks you may wish to speak with your Social Worker in the All Age Disability team to enquire about possible alternative options open to your family at this time.

13)Why have some schools let children back while others have not?

All schools have different staff and premises so even children with similar needs may be accommodated in one school but not in another. The key is the risk assessment carried out by the school. This should explain why the school feel they cannot have your child in safely and this should be discussed with you. The need for risk assessments is explained in point 2.4 of the following national guidance: <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>

14)I have 4 children and only 1 laptop at home. Who can I ask for help? Is the school supposed to do this?

You should talk to your child's school first. The Department for Education will provide digital devices (laptops and tablets) and/or internet access for some disadvantaged children and young people who do not currently have access to them from other sources. National guidance regarding the qualifying criteria can be found via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-technology-for-remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

If you believe that your child may be eligible to receive this assistance, your child's school can make enquiries with the Local Authority on your behalf.

There are also some laptop purchase schemes such as:
<https://www.getonlineathome.org/>

Thank you very much to Southwark Independent Voice (SIV) and all of the families who contributed questions.