

Parents, Carers, Families and Young People

Education and Inclusion

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Date:

Dear Parents, Carers, Families and Young People

COVID-19: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

I am writing to update you on what we are doing to continue to support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) during the Covid-19 pandemic. As you will know, children with SEND can face particular challenges at the current time as do parents and carers. It is a challenging time for those who support them and usually provide the education opportunities for children with SEND.

I want to reassure you that we are here to support you as much as we possibly can through these uncertain times. We will continue to ensure that our systems and processes are still in operation to the best of our ability and capacity, and that we continue to ensure that needs are met as much as possible, whilst respecting the requirements of public protection.

In line with Government Guidance and expectations, parents are asked to keep their children at home **wherever possible**, and for schools to remain open to provide care (rather than education) only for children who are vulnerable and for those children of workers critical to the COVID-19 response who absolutely need to attend.

It is important to underline that schools, all childcare settings (including early years settings, childminders and providers of childcare for school-age children), colleges and other educational establishments, remain safe places for children. But the **fewer children making the journey to school, and the fewer children in educational settings, will protect the NHS and save lives by reducing the risks of spreading the virus.**



Schools, and all childcare providers, are therefore being asked to **continue to provide care** for a limited number of children: children who are vulnerable, and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response **and cannot be safely cared for at home**.

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with education, health and care (EHC) plans.

Those with an EHC plan will have been risk-assessed by their school or college in consultation with the local authority (LA) and parents, to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a school or college place in order to meet their needs, **or whether they can safely have their needs met at home**. This could include, if necessary, carers, therapists or clinicians visiting the home to provide any essential services. **Many children and young people with EHC plans can safely remain at home**.

The expectation is that this risk assessment is regularly reviewed, and this may result in a change in support or perhaps some short-term support from a school or setting. If your child uses specialist equipment, such as a standing frame, please contact the school directly to arrange for this to be moved to your home if your child is not currently accessing a childcare place.

If you feel your child's needs have changed or the support needed has changed then please contact your child's school or setting in the first instance to discuss reviewing the risk assessment or contact a health professional if they are involved in supporting your child. If this does not resolve any concerns or further support/advice is needed, then you can contact the SEN Team.

The SEN Team is now working remotely, but they are working as normal and the team can be contacted either by email

SENTeam@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

or by phone on 0151 337 6505.

The SEN Team are working with colleagues across Education, Health and Social Care and we are doing our best to complete assessments within the normal timescales. The assessment process will be different, because face-to-face meetings are being replaced with telephone calls or other online meetings. While schools are closed as education providers, it will not be possible for all provision specified in EHCPs to be delivered.

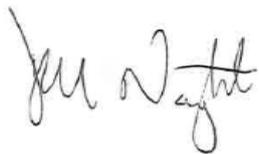
Schools, settings, the LA and partners will endeavour to offer provision in modified ways; for example, providing programmes of work or therapy care plans which can be completed at home or online.

Please also continue to access the Local offer <https://livewell.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/> for up to date guidance, support and resources.

Please be assured that we are doing everything that we can to try to ensure that you continue to receive the best possible support during this difficult time whilst working within

the Government guidelines to keep everyone as safe as possible and within any additional constraints created as a result of the Covid-19 situation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David McNaught". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and 'M'.

David McNaught
Directors of Education and Inclusion