



Coronavirus and SEND

Frequently asked questions

We know how important it is to remain in contact and provide updates at this uncertain time. Due to this we have been working closely with Bedford Borough Parent Carer Forum and other key partners to collect the most common frequently asked questions and to provide answers to these.

The current situation is changing on an almost daily basis so we do advise families as much as possible to go to the [Local Offer](#) for updates, support and guidance during this time. Please also follow the Local Offer on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for updates.

This information was correct as of 8th January 2021.

Where there is a recommendation to speak to your child's school in the first instance, please bear in mind that schools remain open with staff busy teaching both face to face and remotely and some staff self isolating or off work. Please give schools at least a day to respond to any queries you are raising.

Should my child be in school?

The new restrictions mean that schools, special schools, alternative provision, and colleges will remain open only for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children and young people to attend on site. All other pupils and students will receive remote education until at least February half term and must remain at home, in line with national guidance.

We understand this is not welcome news for many parents and carers but it is essential if we are to successfully reduce the transmission of the virus and protect the NHS. In Bedford Borough there is a growing pressure on the hospital and the wider health system and our colleagues across Health and Social Care are working tirelessly to ensure the viability of our health services.

We have seen a sharp rise this week in the number of parents and carers indicating that they are in the critical worker category and this is putting pressure on schools to remain open to more students and hampering efforts to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.

If you are a critical worker and your child(ren) can remain at home rather than attend school, on some or all days, then they should. Please only use the offer of a school place provision when it is crucial for you to undertake your critical role and you cannot support your child(ren) at home.

We would encourage parents to have a discussion with their child's school in the first instance to talk through whether their child meets the criteria for attendance, any barriers or issues there may be to remote learning and also any challenges the school may be facing regarding remaining open and keeping staff and students safe. We would hope that reasonable discussions can take place to find a way forward on a case by case basis.

If your child has a social worker it is likely that a discussion will take place with you about whether your child should be in school and any issues or challenges there may be with home learning.

I am worried I will support my child wrongly at home where can I ask for support?

Many parents struggle with their own learning, mental health or wellbeing and this can impact on their ability to support their child's learning at home. There is no shame in this and we would encourage parents to be discussing this with their child's school. If this is a barrier to the child engaging with home learning then the school should take this into consideration as to whether the child should be classed as a vulnerable learner and be in school.

Parents should be discussing support regarding education matters and the work being sent home with their child's school and in particular the SENDCO. Work being sent home should be differentiated to best suit the individual child's needs, this means that the work being set should be suited to the child's individual needs and ability. Parents may not be able to tell if the work is differentiated without seeing it compared to another child's work, so if there is any concern or doubt then speak to your child's SENDCO.

Bedford Borough's Education Psychology Team will be supporting through daily telephone drop in support and advice. To book a slot with an Educational Psychologist please call 01234 228693 or Email: school.support@bedford.gov.uk

Bedford Borough's Teaching and Learning Advisors for SEND are attending the sessions being held by the Parent Carer Forum on remote learning. They are there to listen and support where they can and will be looking at whether future sessions for parents to support on this are needed.

If you are having difficulties with managing your child and would like Early Help Support please call 01234 718 700 or email EarlyHelpHub@Bedford.gov.uk

Practitioners can offer telephone, text or virtual support using technology and we are still meeting regularly as a management team via Teams to prioritise any requests for support.

If you feel your child may have an underlying condition which is impacting on their behaviour, toileting or sleep and would like advice you can speak to a Nurse from the Child Development Centre. More information can be found on the Local Offer [here](#).

How can I gather information to not delay a diagnosis and support?

The Education Psychology Service is still operating and conducting assessments either digitally or in person if the child is still attending a school.

You can find out more information about how coronavirus is affecting children's community health services by clicking [here](#).

Nurse led clinics are being offered via telephone consultations and the local offer is available for information throughout this time. More information can be found on the Local Offer [here](#).

I am worried about a behaviour outburst from my child, where can I go for support?

We are able to offer parents the opportunity to speak to an Early Help Practitioner. Please call 01234 718 700 or email EarlyHelpHub@Bedford.gov.uk

For parents who have access to technology we are able to offer access to an online parenting programme with some practitioner support via telephone at points during the online programme.

The Local Offer also has details of support and advice that is available. <https://localoffer.bedford.gov.uk>

Who can I talk to regarding Education/ health /social care issues, where are useful numbers and contacts?

The Local Offer has a list of helplines for a wide range of issues and difficulties. Below are some useful details but [click here](#) for a full list of helplines on the Local Offer

The Local Offer has a list of Mental Health Helplines for both children and adults. [Click here](#) for more information.

SENDIASS are offering telephone support during this time. SENDIASS details are 01234 276 267

E-mail: sendiass@bedford.gov.uk

Carers in Bedfordshire have a telephone helpline open Monday to Friday 9am – 4.30pm. Their Support Workers are happy to listen to you and offer advice if needed. Ring 0300 111 1919

If you are struggling to phone during these times you can send an email to contact@carersinbeds.org.uk with any questions or concerns you might have. You can view more information by [clicking here](#).

[Parentline](#) is a secure and confidential text service for parents and carers of those aged 0-19. It offers advice and support on a range of issues such as weaning, sleep and emotional health or how to make an appointment with our team. This is also a great mechanism to find out how to access other local services. Simply text 07507 331456 with your question to start the conversation – our team will be there to answer your queries from 9am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays)

As well as helplines, Bedford Borough's Local Offer has updates regarding useful contact numbers, information for children and young people and their families and also has updates on each services offer of support during the coronavirus pandemic. <https://Localoffer.bedford.gov.uk>

We have used social care before but are not anymore, how if required, can I get support?

If you feel that your family requires support from social care then please call 01234 718 700 to discuss your family's situation.

More information regarding support through children's social care can be found on the Local Offer [here](#).

Information regarding thresholds for accessing support through children's social care can be found on the Local Offer [here](#).

My child is SEN support how can I get support and keep evidence for my child so he/she will get help going back to school?

Children identified as requiring SEN Support and who are struggling with engaging with home learning can be classed as vulnerable learners in certain circumstances. A discussion should always take place with your child's school about any challenges faced with home learning, any additional support required to support with home learning and any concerns or fears you may have regarding your child falling behind or missing out on evidencing their needs.

If it is felt that an EHC Needs assessment is required then the school can still complete an EHCNAF or parents can also request an assessment. More information on the processes can be found on the Help and Advice section of the Local Offer which can be found [here](#).

Bedford Borough's SEND Teaching and Learning Advisors are in regular contact with SENCo's and are sending out weekly information that can guide SENCo's to co-ordinating the support of SEND pupils.

Bedford Borough's SENDIASS service is also available for telephone support should families have any other queries or questions relating to SEN Support and the EHCP process. More information can be found on the Local Offer [here](#).

Will EHCP reviews still be taking place?

As children with EHCP's are classed as vulnerable learners they can still access school if the parents wish for them to do so. If schools are able to, they can continue to hold EHCP Annual Review Meetings with parents via telephone or video conferencing. Completed paperwork is to be sent into the SEND Team inbox as usual and it will be processed in due course electronically. Parents can still email the SEND Team for advice on these meetings, or they can contact SENDIASS for support.

If services that are supporting the child are not able to submit reports or attend annual reviews due to staff being redeployed then a discussion between the parents and school should take place regarding whether to continue with the annual review or whether they wish to defer the annual review until later in the year.

I am waiting for an EHC needs assessment, what should I do?

For children and young people currently going through the EHC needs assessment process we will complete it with the advice received so far. The Education Psychology Service is still operating and conducting assessments either digitally or in person if the child is still attending a school.

Co-Production Meetings will continue to be held virtually (as they were prior to this current lockdown)

Virtual SEND Panels are continuing to be held fortnightly. If an EHC Needs Assessment is agreed the Local Authority will request advices as normal, however there may be some delays or challenges with securing all advice, if there are any challenges with this then these will be shared and discussed with the family.

I have no diagnosis for my child and now I am at home and no support where do I go?

Bedford Borough Educational Psychology team are offering 30 minute virtual drop in slots to parents/carers or other professionals to offer advice and guidance on a child/young person's wellbeing during lockdown. The Drop Ins will commence Monday 11th January from 9am – 11am and will run daily. For more information [click here](#).

If you are having difficulties with managing your child's behaviour and would like Early Help Support please call 01234 718 700 or email EarlyHelpHub@Bedford.gov.uk

If you feel your child may have an underlying condition which is impacting on their behaviour, toileting or sleep and would like advice you can speak to a Nurse from the Child Development Centre. More information can be found on the Local Offer [here](#).