

SUMMER 2020



The latest news and updates from the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reforms in Bromley



Welcome to the summer issue of SENDMatters

We use this newsletter as a key channel for sharing information about the changes, developments and relevant news for all those interested in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reforms in Bromley. This issue covers a range of COVID-19 related updates along with the latest news on the exciting new Special Free School being developed in the borough. You can stay up to date with the latest news by visiting our Bromley Local Offer website - simply go to www.bromley.gov.uk/localoffer.

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Returning to school

We want every one to feel comfortable when it comes to returning to school. That's why we've been working hard to develop a partnership response to supporting emotional wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the lockdown we envisage that many people (children, young people and adults) will feel worried and anxious about returning to school and as a local area we wanted to offer a joined up approach that was flexible and responsive to school's needs as they arose. We recognise the importance of getting wellbeing right before we focus on academic learning and progression.



We are offering each school a single point of contact for a number of key teams within Bromley so that they can request support relevant to their school and regarding any specific issues that arise. The professionals connected to the school will also be aware of each other so can offer a joined up approach. If you have any concerns or questions, please talk to the Senco at your school or setting. You may also find it useful to read the Government's guidance on education and childcare during coronavirus - visit www.gov.uk/coronavirus/education-and-childcare.

An open letter to families

The Council and NHS South East London Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) wrote an open letter to families in Bromley in June.

The letter explained how children and young people with Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans have been supported while schools and settings are in the process of a wider reopening. If you have any questions about the support your child is receiving during this time, the best place to contact is their nursery, school or college. After you have done this, if you still have any questions, please make contact with your allocated EHC Plan Coordinator or you can email SENAdmin@bromley.gov.uk.

Read now by visiting www.bromley.gov.uk/localoffer > What's happening in SEND

Developing a new Special Free School for Bromley

We remain committed to opening a new Special Free School and Autism Centre of Excellence in Bromley, working closely with the Department for Education, which is managing the project.



There have been some delays in this process; however, this has provided us with an opportunity to review local needs and complete a full root and branch review to ensure we can secure high quality provision which meets the future needs of our local community.

We have also taken the time to undertake further engagement across the local area through a range of activities including the significant contribution from the Autism All Age Partnership group. We are grateful for this input, all of which has been captured to inform the next stage of the proposals. We are working closely with the Department for Education on very tight timescales and are focused on delivering the Special Free School and Autism Centre of Excellence as soon as is possible.

We are expecting exciting news from the Department for Education on the development of this project over the next few weeks and will provide further updates when available.

The lockdown experience: the views of our children

We would like to find out what it has been like for children and young people who have SEND during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We also want to find out what will help children and young people when it is time for everyone to go back to school. All answers are anonymous.

All feedback should be done by 31 July 2020.

Survey link:

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/mylockdownexperience

Easy read survey link:

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/easyread-mylockdown



What's happening with short breaks across the borough?

An update from Mark Smith, Group Manager: Children's Disability Service

I wanted to provide an update on what we are doing to support families during these difficult times. Unfortunately some services have been closed during the pandemic, which we know has been difficult for many.

I have written to families receiving a service from the Children's Disability Service explaining that the Riverside playscheme is being held this summer and will run to full capacity. Hollybank has been closed; however, I am pleased to confirm that it will be reopening soon. Hollybank will be running to 50% capacity and initially supporting day care as there is a requirement for fire safety doors to be replaced before they can offer overnight support. I will be writing again shortly to all families known to the Children's Disability Service to provide a further update on the support we can provide over the summer until the start of the new school term.

In addition, this Summer we have agreed further funding to commission additional short breaks, which will be open to children known to the Children's Disability Service as well those who have SEND not known to the service. We hope to commission a number of programmes over the summer to support families across the borough. As and when we have updates we will upload information on to the local offer and work with partner agencies to inform families of the schemes running.

If you have any questions relating to Short Breaks please contact the Children's Disability Service by emailing DisabledChildrensTeam@bromley.gov.uk or by calling **020 8313 4511**.

You can watch a video from Mark Smith at <https://youtu.be/6QpUieWVMVM>.

Update on children's therapy services

Bromley Healthcare children's therapy services will be offering appointments as a combination of remote (telephone and video) and face-to-face appointments depending on clinical assessment.

Services are identifying new ways to implement new ways of working to ensure that parents and schools are able to access support in as timely way as possible.

Physiotherapy

- Usual referral criteria resumed from July.
- Currently prioritising children with physiotherapy on their EHC Plan (section G) and children with urgent needs, including early years, complex needs and children with equipment or orthotics needs.
- Orthotics clinic has restarted from July.

Occupational therapy

- Usual referral criteria resumed from July.
- Currently prioritising children with occupational therapy on their EHC Plan (section G), children with urgent or complex needs including hospital discharge.
- From August the full service will be operating, but services will continue to be offered remotely where possible and urgent cases will be prioritised.

Speech and Language Therapy (SALT)

- Usual referral criteria resumed from July.
- Currently prioritising children with SALT on their EHC Plan (section G), children with dysphagia, young people under the Youth Offending Service, children who are deaf and those with urgent needs.
- The service will be contacting parents of preschool children who are due to start school in September offering a telephone advice line.

Dietetics

- Currently accepting referrals for children on enteral feeds, babies under 6 months with allergies, faltering growth and any urgent issues.
- From August, the service will accept referrals for children with obesity.
- The usual referral criteria will resume from September.
- Virtual clinics are restarted in July.
- From August full service will be operating but services will continue to be offered remotely where possible and urgent cases will be prioritised.

Referrals made to services, during the period when only essential services were running, that were rejected would need to be resent if the referral is still required.

Travel assistance for children who have SEND: question & answer session

The legal duties around travel assistance for pupils who have SEND have not changed. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Central Transport Service in Bromley has continued to offer a safe and compliant transport service in accordance with Government guidance for eligible pupils.

Can my child access their usual transport service to their setting?

Where a child is eligible for transport and their parent or carer is unable to transport them to and from school, a Council provided transport service will be available.

This may or may not be the same service provider, crew or vehicle that previously transported the child to their school.



How can we keep pupils safe whilst travelling to and from school?

The Council, schools and transport providers are working together to put in measures in place. Vehicles are cleansed as soon as practicable. The same crew and vehicle transport the same children for the morning and afternoon journey.

The Government's safer transport guidance is available at <https://bit.ly/covid-safertransport>.

Where families include an extremely vulnerable person, or a person who is currently shielding, that member of the family should not place themselves at potential additional risk of infection through placing their child on shared transport.

Parental mileage

We are aware that many working parents and carers circumstances have changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as they may be furloughed or working from home.

Many families have used this increased flexibility to support their child to access their education and we would strongly encourage families to continue to take their child to and from school where this is possible.

The Council offers the reimbursement of parental mileage for transporting your child to and from school to help to reduce social contact. Full details of the mileage allowance and the payment process will be given at the time of the travel assistance offer.

If your child or young person is usually eligible for SEN transport assistance and, you are currently transporting them to school, please contact sentransport@bromley.gov.uk to discuss options for travel assistance.

We would hope that where families are able to, they will wish to continue to support their child to access school.

It is also accepted that circumstances may change and the transport team will work in partnership with families and schools to provide a suitable transport offer for eligible children and young people, subject to the Government guidance and restrictions.

Accessing healthcare during the pandemic

COVID-19 has caused changes to the way you access healthcare over the last few months.

And it will continue to have an impact and we will not return to normal this year.

NHS South East London CCG have created a short survey to help us better understand your experience so far. This will help us plan better for the future.

Please submit your survey answer by 26 July 2020.

Survey link: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Bromley_Patient_Survey

If you have any problems, please email broccg.patientquery@nhs.net.

Changes relating to children on the Shielding List

The majority of children currently considered extremely clinical vulnerable to COVID-19 will be able to be removed from the Government's shielding list.

Independent evidence from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH), working with specialists in paediatric medicine, shows the risk of serious illness for children and young people is low and only those with the most severe conditions should now be considered clinically extremely vulnerable.

Children will only be removed from the shielded patient list by their GP or specialist doctor following consultation with the child and their family. Specialists and GPs will be asked to contact children and their families to discuss this over the summer, so families do not need to take any immediate action.

If you want to know more, visit www.gov.uk/government/news/majority-of-children-no-longer-need-to-shield.



For any comments relating to the information in this edition or to include information in subsequent editions please email sendmatters@bromley.gov.uk

Useful links of information and advice

Easy read document to help understand why masks are needed at this current time: www.keepsafe.org.uk/mask

Exemptions from wearing face masks designed by Bromley Autism Partnership: <https://bit.ly/covid-facecoverings>

A practical guide to support pupils and students to manage change during periods of disruption: www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/managing-unexpected-endings-and-transitions

Top tips for preparing your child for returning to school: www.rcot.co.uk/preparing-your-child-returning-school