Coronavirus and SEND Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ’s) – May 2020

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 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](https://localoffer.bedford.gov.uk) for updates, support and guidance during this time. Please also follow the Local Offer on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for updates.

The below answers have been provided by Bedford Borough Children’s Services, SEND Team, Education Psychology Service, School Improvement Service, East London Foundation Trust (CAMHS), and Bedfordshire Community Health Services. This information was correct as of 18th May 2020.

**Health related FAQ’s**

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| * My child's bedwetting has got worse since the crisis has begun, what can I do to help? |
| Contact Nurse-Led Clinic Advice Line 01234 310271 9.30-11.30 Mon to Fri (& Thurs 1.30-2.30pm) for support and advice.  ERIC website is a really helpful site. <https://www.eric.org.uk/pages/category/bedwetting>  Simple Measures:   * Drink at least 1.5 litres a day (most of this drunk before the end of school day) * Avoid blackcurrant, fizzy drinks, orange juice and caffeine (bladder irritants) * Stop drinks 2 hours before bed * boys sit to wee * Attempt 2 wee’s before bedtime (double voiding)   Emotional wellbeing:  [Chums website](http://chums.uk.com/)  Social stories – contact [Nurse-Led clinic](https://localoffer.bedford.gov.uk/kb5/bedford/directory/service.page?id=esfKLpudeTk&localofferchannel=0)  Coronavirus ebook <https://nosycrow.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coronavirus-A-Book-for-Children.pdf>  Young Minds website <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/supporting-your-child-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/> |
| * I am concerned we need an ADHD Assessment but can't get a referral, what can I do to get support? |
| School SENDCO’s, the School Nurse Team, Health Visitor, Therapist or GP (although GP may not be the best source of referral as GP may not know your child well enough to give sufficient information) can make referrals.  Refer to <https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/Bedfordshire/CDC/resources> for up to date sources of support or call Nurse led advice line for further advice 01234 / 310271, 9.30-11.30 Mon to Fri (& Thurs 1.30-2.30pm). Make notes of your concerns. |
| * Maintaining a routine is proving difficult in all areas of behaviour, sleep, learning and exercise my child needs routine any advice, please? |
| Contact the Nurse-Led Clinic Advice Line 01234 310271 9.30-11.30 Mon to Fri (& Thurs 1.30-2.30pm) for support and advice. Refer to <https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/Bedfordshire/CDC/resources>  Simple Measures:   * Use visuals to support day’s routine * Give warning of activities / routine * Find motivators (rewards) for after activity is finished * Use timers so child understands when an activity ends * Make sure child is comfortable – regular mealtimes, drink breaks, comfortable at table to work, * Stick to same bedtime routine – stick to same order each evening.   Preparing For Bed   * + Maintain a ‘quiet time’ 1 hour before bedtime   + Dim the lights; ideally turn off the TV and choose activities that help to unwind. Story tapes/book or calming music may be helpful   + This would be a good time for your child to have a drink of milk and a biscuit   + Go ‘upstairs’ to the bathroom. Once upstairs, never go downstairs again, this provides an environmental cue to your child that it is time for sleep   + A relaxing bath would be beneficial. The aim of the bath is to provide an unwinding routine and once again, an environmental cue   + Prepare the bedroom for bedtime. Encourage your child to take an active role in preparing the bedroom for sleep. For example, closing the curtains, pulling back the duvet and covering any toys with a blanket   + Placing a photograph of yourself beside the bed and a blanket or an item that your child associates with you, may help your child to feel safe and secure   + Settle your child into bed; say ‘goodnight, kiss etc (whatever is your routine). Avoid extending the bedtime routine (for example, one more story, one more cuddle). Say the magic phrase, such as ‘time for sleep’   + Turn off the light and leave the room. A night-light may be used if necessary to assist your child to feel secure. Ensure that the night-light remains on all night as your child will need the same environment to re-settle should they wake during the night   + If possible, close the bedroom door. For some children it may take a series of nights to gradually close the door   + If closing the door is not tolerated, ensure that any lights on the landing are dim   In the first instance parents should be discussing support regarding learning / education matters 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.  Bedford Borough’s Education Psychology Team will be supporting through daily telephone drop in support and advice which may help with how to develop a good routine. To book a slot with an Educational Psychologist please call 01234 228693 or Email: [school.support@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:school.support@bedford.gov.uk)  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](mailto:EarlyHelpHub@Bedford.gov.uk)  Practitioners can offer telephone, text or Skype support and we are still meeting regularly as a management team via Skype to prioritise any requests for support  The Local Offer also has details of support and advice that is available. <https://localoffer.bedford.gov.uk> |
| * I am on a waiting list for a therapy service, where are useful resources I can use until someone makes contact? |
| For Speech, Language and Communication difficulties, the Bedfordshire SLT Service website has lots of useful information and resources - <https://childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/>  For Occupational Therapy, the service page on the CCS NHS website has useful information and resources that parents can download: <https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/Bedfordshire/services/occupational-therapy>  There are lots of other sources of information and resources on the CCS website that may support and the Local Offer also has details of support and advice that is available: <https://localoffer.bedford.gov.uk> |
| * I am concerned my child's speech is deteriorating and will fall behind socially and educational what is available for us to do? |
| * The SLT service is still offering appointments via phone and video, for new assessments, reviews, and some workshops. * Speech and Language Therapists and Support Practitioners are calling families who have existing appointments and letting people know that their appointment has been changed to a phone review due to the current guidance around Covid -19. * Existing appointments are carried out via phone or video . * The service is piloting a videoconferencing facility to further improve this experience for families. * The service has collated a range of videos and advice (webpages / YouTube videos) to * share with parents / carers. * The service **is liaising with Education staff**, in the case of school-aged children, to gain information about progress in school. * **Worksheets and advice** can be emailed to families and schools. * **EHCP Assessment** report requests – These are still being written, based on the information the clinician has, together with detailed discussions with parents / carers and if possible with schools / pre-schools. Reports will start and end with a caveat that the child was not seen face to face, and documentation can be updated as necessary when face to face contact is possible * Children with **Dysphagia** (swallowing difficulties) - the service is continuing to offer our dysphagia patients telephone consultations ( aiming to move to video consultations soon) We can only be offer a face to face appointment to patients that are considered to be at high risk. The service has access to appropriate PPE to see children with dysphagia face to face if necessary. * **Videofluoroscopy** clinics are suspended at present at both the L&D and Bedford Hospital, but we will let families know when the situation changes.   Please go to the [Bedfordshire Paediatric Speech and Language Service website](https://childspeechbedfordshire.nhs.uk/) where there are further links depending on need. |
| * We are worried missing therapy will have a long-term effect on our child are there plans in place to help with the missed appointments going forward to lessen long term damage? |
| As outlined above, to reduce the impact of missing appointments, therapy services are contacting their caseload and, where possible, sessions are taking place over the phone or video conferencing. Families are welcome to contact the service if they have any specific concerns; Please call our single point of access for all Bedfordshire children’s services on 0300 555 0606 |
| * We were waiting for physio will we still be contacted and given some support? |
| The Paediatric Physiotherapy Staff have been redeployed to various locations within Bedford Hospital Trust. All Parents have access to their physio’s emails and programmes/activities where possible have been provided to the families. The service has written to those on their waiting list explaining the situation and when able they will offer an appointment as soon as possible. |
| * There are inconsistencies with Melatonin prescriptions - what letters do the CDC send to parents to give to pharmacists? |
| We recognise there has been confusion around this since July 2019 when a newly licensed melatonin product entered the market.  The new product contains alcohol and propylene glycol and is not suitable for children’s use, however strict drug licensing laws prioritises its licence against other more suitable products to prescribe. Clinicians now prescribing melatonin liquid (free from alcohol and propylene glycol), have to justify why the new licensed product is unsuitable for children’s use.  A standard letter is available on Community GP’s electronic record systems and is easily accessible for use |
| * Can GP surgeries manage the automatic medication reviews (maybe a text messaging service?) Are GP’s flexible at the moment about the reviews? Currently they have to be carried out by EL/ CDC and without a review the medication will potentially be stopped. |
| We have a local system whereby drugs for ADHD are prescribed by GPs under a shared care agreement in line with agreed policies. The drugs require careful monitoring and GP’s have a duty of care to carry out the prescribing in line with established procedures. If monitoring checks agreed within the procedures aren’t achieved, then GP’s will be unable to continue to safely prescribe medication. Whilst most GPs will try to be a little flexible with the timings, in certain situations decisions may be made not to prescribe on the grounds of patient safety. An example could be if patients regularly ‘do not attend (DNA) their appointments and the benefits and risks of the medication are unable to be fully reviewed, resulting in an overall increased risk and the medication is stopped. |
| * Is there a way of enabling pharmacies to deliver medicine directly at the moment despite it being classed as a controlled substance? |
| Pharmacists have been commissioned to deliver to individual patients who are shielding during the Covid-19 pandemic. The service does focus on very high risk patients that are required to shield and pharmacists may have to prioritise. We would encourage Patients are kindly asked to consider other opportunities prior to requesting a pharmacy delivery including;  · Family and friends as an initial resource if available, followed by  · NHS volunteers and finally  · Pharmacy delivery service as the last option  We would encourage parents to collect medication directly from the pharmacy for their children if they can. Alternatively to use friends and family/other reliable options prior to requesting a pharmacy delivery.  The pharmacy can deliver controlled drugs. This is routine practice built into the standard operating procedures of all pharmacies that deliver, however please be mindful that delivery is usually prioritised for vulnerable patients. |

**Education and Social Care FAQ’s**

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| * My child is transitioning to a new education provision, and we were advised that we would receive additional support and transfer day visits, what will be the arrangements now? |
| Currently in development is a document to support schools with supporting effective transition for Nursery to reception for pupils with additional needs.  The secondary schools have worked together to agree a transition package and support for parents and pupils. Secondary school SENCo’s have coproduced and agreed to work on 5 minimum strategies. This was agreed on the back of a paper around 6-7 transition with resources discussed with SENCo’s on our Keeping in Touch Meeting. This will be followed up at this weeks meeting – 14/05  5 strategies are:   * Have a conversation with all parents/carers of learners with an EHCP due to start with them in September 2020 * Create a short video of the school, or provide some photos, and email this to EHC plan learners parents/carers with a welcome message * Ask their learners to create a short welcome video message * Invite Year 6 learners, including those with SEND, to attend any online assemblies or suitable events. * Write to families committing to take all reasonable steps to support transition, despite the challenge of school closure. Include key information for new parents.   SENCO’s are receiving up to date advice re CPD and resources to support transition in light of COVID 19 and regular updates through a SENCO newsletter.  Return to school plans for pupils with an EHCP are currently being devised  Educational Psychology service are developing guidance and support for pupils going back into school. |
| * We are all struggling, how we can access social care at the current time and are social workers trained to understand SEND? |
| 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](https://localoffer.bedford.gov.uk/kb5/bedford/directory/service.page?id=KhuF2dS2z58&localofferchannel=0)  Information regarding thresholds for accessing support through children’s social care can be found on the Local Offer [here](https://localoffer.bedford.gov.uk/kb5/bedford/directory/service.page?id=ZKjIOWtdbQQ&localofferchannel=0)  All social workers are trained to support children with all ranges of developmental or learning needs. Bedford Borough Social Care has a “SEND champion” for every social work team to further embed the latest knowledge and practice for supporting children and young people with SEND and their families. |
| * As a parent, I am struggling with my mental health; my child is SEN, what support is there, is they a way to get some respite? |
| If you are having difficulties with your mental health and this is impacting on your ability to manage your child’s behaviour, you may be able to access Early Help Support. Please call 01234 718 700 or email [EarlyHelpHub@Bedford.gov.uk](mailto:EarlyHelpHub@Bedford.gov.uk)  If you feel that your mental health needs are resulting in your need for respite in the family home, you may wish to discuss this with the safeguarding officer at your child’s school who can discuss potential options of your child attending school.  You may be entitled to a parent carer assessment; if you feel that you might qualify for a parent carer assessment from social care then please call 01234 718 700 to discuss your family’s situation, however this does not guarantee respite unless your child meets the criteria for Children With Disabilities Team. You can read more about the thresholds for accessing support through children’s social care can be found on the Local Offer [here](https://localoffer.bedford.gov.uk/kb5/bedford/directory/service.page?id=ZKjIOWtdbQQ&localofferchannel=0) |
| * We are financially struggling we don't have a computer to access a lot of support, what is available locally? |
| If work is being set online but you do not have access to a computer or the internet then this should be discussed with your child’s school so that alternative work can be sent home. All schools have reported that they have provided physical copies of work to every child if access to on line materials is not possible and many schools have provided laptops or other devices on a loan to parents that might not be eligible via any government schemes.  Where this has not happened please contact your school in the first instance and let the PCF know if this remains an issue as additional funding has been sourced to enable schools to provide this facility.  FACES is a local charity who is supporting families with reconditioned laptops. More information can be found at <https://www.facesbedford.org/>  A good website to look at what grants are available is <https://www.disability-grants.org/>  If you or your child has an allocated Early Help or Social Worker then it would be advisable to discuss this issue with them so that they can advise on any other support that might be available locally. |
| * My child behaviour is escalating; it's getting worse. Who can help us we are struggling to cope? |
| 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](mailto:EarlyHelpHub@Bedford.gov.uk)  For parents who are 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> |
| * What reassurance will SEN support parents get that our SEN children will be a priority when schools reopen so that they are still achieving and part of school life? |
| The latest Government advice regarding schools reopening can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>  The school improvement service is working closely with all schools to consider the arrangements needed to support children and staff as schools reopen, this involves consideration of vulnerable learners and those with SEND.  If your child falls into one of the year groups identified for returning to school upon reopening then you should discuss arrangements with the school at that time. |
| * My child has been assessed for an EHCP. We are now in the 20-week time frame waiting for it to be done, in the meantime, could my child be in school like a child with an EHCP child, as a family we are struggling to cope at home? |
| If your child is being assessed for an EHCP and you as a family are struggling to cope at home you should contact your school’s head teacher to discuss the situation. The advice remains that most children are safer at home however head teachers will consider each family and child’s circumstances and has the discretion to identify a child as a ‘vulnerable learner’ who should be in school in exceptional circumstances. |