

# Coronavirus (COVID-19) General Information, Government Guidance and Advice

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## 1. Health

All the latest information and guidance from NHS on coronavirus (COVID-19) can be found on the [www.nhs.uk/coronavirus](http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) webpages

The NHS have issued special guidance for parents, with details of what professional advice to seek in different circumstances. The leaflet setting out this guidance can be found [here](#).

## 2. Education

The Government have produced several guides for parents and carers, which includes [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance on vulnerable children and young people](#) and [Information for parents and carers on the closure of educational settings](#) which has been updated as follows;

**26<sup>th</sup> June 2020-** [Education, health and care needs assessments and plans: guidance on temporary legislative changes relating to coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) This includes the following guidance

- [Supporting vulnerable children and young people during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)
- [Supporting children and young people with SEND as schools and colleges prepare for wider opening](#)

**30 June 2020-** content on summer provision, school uniform and a package of support aimed at helping pupils to catch up was added. Guidance for parents and carers was updated [changes to schools and education during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#). This includes information on [providing free school meals during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#) and what to do if you're newly eligible for free school meals and the [COVID Summer Food Fund](#).

**2 July 2020-** Guidance issued for parents and carers about early years providers, schools and colleges in the summer and autumn terms. [What parents and carers need to know about nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges until August 2020](#) and [What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges in the autumn term](#)

The Department for Education have set up a Coronavirus helpline for anyone with education-related questions. It can be reached on 08000 468687 between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday or by email at [DFE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk](mailto:DFE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk).

Ofqual have sent a message for all GCSE, AS and A level students regarding grading this summer. Further details are available [here](#).

### 3.SEND

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, Vicky Ford, sent an open letter, dated 24 March 2020, to children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), their parents, families and others who support them. The letter signposts key Covid-19 SEND guidance published on 22 March 2020. The full letter can be found [here](#).

If you have a medical condition that makes you extremely vulnerable, you can apply to [get coronavirus support as an extremely vulnerable person](#).

Easy Read Online have produced easy read guides regarding Coronavirus, which could be used to explain what is happening to young people with SEND. These Easy Read guides can be found [here](#)

Please see the document “Coronavirus (COVID-19): [Support and resources](#) to help children, young people, carers and their families” for resources to support your child, young person and the family during this difficult time.

Please see this guide <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-online-education-resources/online-science-pe-wellbeing-and-send-resources-for-home-education> for resources to support science, PE, wellbeing and SEND for children currently being educated at home.

#### 3.1 What does this mean for my child?

Guidance states there is a current expectation that vulnerable children and young people of all year groups will attend educational or childcare provision, where it is safe and appropriate for them to do so. Vulnerable children and young people in this context include those who have an education, health and care plan, (EHCP).

If your child has SEN but does not have an EHCP, unless they are considered vulnerable for another reason, such as having a social worker, then they will have the same expectation as other children in their year group. The guidance about full school reopening from September 2020 can be found here [Guidance for full opening: schools](#)

From week commencing 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020, the DfE asked:

- all schools and childcare providers to continue to offer places to vulnerable groups;
- that mainstream schools ‘should not plan on the basis of a rota system, either daily or weekly’; and,
- that special schools, specialist post-16 institutions and hospital schools can work towards a phased return of more children and young people without a focus on specific year groups and informed by a risk assessment (see 3.2 & 3.3 below). Guidance adds that they may want to consider creating part-time attendance rotas so that as many children as possible can benefit from attending their setting.’

Updated guidance for schools was published on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2020 <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/guidance-for-schools-coronavirus-covid-19>

This was updated on 3rd July to provide guidance about full opening of schools from September 2020 [Guidance for full opening: schools](#)

This includes a section regarding special educational needs and disability <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-send-risk-assessment-guidance> and a section of guidance (see below) for parents and carers <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

### 3.2 What is the guidance for parents and carers?

Guidance to parents identified that from 1<sup>st</sup> June 'it is no longer necessary for parents of eligible children (in this context children with an EHCP) to keep them at home if they can'.

Local guidance draws together information detailed within Government guidance published:

- 26th May 2020 – 'Supporting children and young people with SEND as schools and colleges prepare for wider opening. Guidance for Conducting a SEND risk assessment during the coronavirus outbreak' is detailed [here](#).
- 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020 - 'Actions for education and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1 June 2020' is detailed [here](#).
- 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2020 - 'What parents and carers need to know about schools, colleges and other education settings during the coronavirus outbreak' is detailed [here](#)
- 17<sup>th</sup> June 2020- guidance was updated <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-send-risk-assessment-guidance>
- 3rd July 2020-[Guidance for full opening: special schools and other specialist settings](#) This sets out the expectation that almost all children will return to school in September including many of those who are currently shielding.

### 3.3 SEND Risk Assessment

In light of changes to guidance, from June 1<sup>st</sup> there is an expectation that children and young people with an EHCP of all year groups will attend educational or childcare provision, where is it safe and appropriate for them to do so.

The Department for Education have been clear that *proportionate* risk assessments should be completed for all children and young people with EHC plans and the local authority has already provided the suggested template (below) to schools and settings.



NTC Template Risk  
Assessment 2.1 (004).

Education providers may choose to use a different format as long as it covers the right issues well enough. Risk assessments should be completed in consultation with parents/carers and pupils, and with social care and health where they are actively involved.

The local authority now needs to understand which children with an EHC plan are not in education and crucially, why that is. This is because the local authority is ultimately responsible for ensuring that 'reasonable endeavours' have been made to secure provision as set out in an EHC plan.

### **3.4 What we have done so far**

Education providers have told us about those children and young people with EHCPs who will be receiving a level of onsite provision between now and September and those who will not. Where children with an EHC plan are not receiving on site provision at all, the local authority has asked for information about why that is and the SEND and Inclusion Service has asked education providers to send their risk assessment for children who will not be onsite.

### **3.5 What happens next?**

SEND and Inclusion Services will review children who are not in school but where the parental preference is that they **are** in school. Education providers and the local authority must have a clear, shared understanding of these particular children and how their educational needs are being met.

Risk assessments will be updated when there is a change in circumstances such as a child who was not in school returns or a child who was in school stops coming or a child receives a new EHCP.

Risk assessments may prove useful now and over the autumn term, in identifying what additional support children and young people with EHC plans need to make a successful return to full education. Risk assessments may also prove useful if children and young people have to self-isolate, or if a local outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) requires a setting to return to more limited attendance, or temporarily close.

Whether individual risk assessments are used to help plan for the autumn term or not, education settings should, in the spirit of coproduction, contact parents and involve them in planning for their child's return to their setting from September. They should also contact and involve young people over 16 who have EHC plans. That might include visits to the setting, social stories, and other approaches that specialist settings normally

use to enable a child or young person with SEND, who has spent some time out of education, to return to full provision.

### **3.6 Returning to school in September**

[Guidance for full opening: special schools and other specialist settings](#) published on 2<sup>nd</sup> July sets out the government's plan that all children and young people, in all year groups and setting types, will return to education settings full time from the beginning of the autumn term.

This guidance is intended to support special schools, special post-16 institutions (SPIs) and other specialist education settings, such as hospital schools, to prepare for this.

The autumn term guidance for [early years, mainstream schools and further education \(FE\) colleges and providers](#) provides information on steps they will need to take to ensure children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can return to full time provision.

### **3.7 Pupils who are shielding or self-isolating**

We now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and so in future there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school. You should note however that:

- a small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
- shielding advice for all adults and children will pause on 1 August, subject to a continued decline in the rates of community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding. Read the [current advice on shielding](#)
- if rates of the disease rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, will be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore they may be temporarily absent (see below).
- some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school (usually at their next planned clinical appointment). You can find more advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health at [COVID-19 - 'shielding' guidance for children and young people](#).

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, we expect schools to be able to immediately offer them access to remote education.

Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised.

### **3.8 Pupils and families who are anxious about return to school**

All other pupils must attend school. Schools should bear in mind the potential concerns of pupils, parents and households who may be reluctant or anxious about returning and put the right support in place to address this. (Please see the [Support and resources](#) document for helpful ideas about how to support children returning to school. ) This may include pupils who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, we recommend schools discuss their concerns and provide reassurance of the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk in school. Schools should be clear with parents that pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is absent for a necessary religious observance etc).

### **4.Changes to Government Guidance and Legislation due to Coronavirus and what this means for your child in relation to EHC processes**

The Coronavirus Act 2020 allows the Secretary of State, where appropriate, to temporarily lift statutory duties on local authorities with regards to those with Special Educational Needs and Disability.

#### **4.1 Temporary Modifications to Section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014:**

On 28 April 2020, the Secretary of State for Education issued a notice modifying section 42 of the 2014 Act (the duty to secure special educational provision and health care provision in accordance with an EHCP). The specified time period of that notice was 1 May to 31 May 2020.

The Secretary of State for Education issued a second notice to modify section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014. This applied from 1 June 2020 to 30 June 2020. A third notice was issued on 29<sup>th</sup> June and will apply between 1<sup>st</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020.

This modifies the duty on local authorities to 'secure' or arrange special educational provision and on health commissioning bodies to arrange health provision in accordance with EHC plans, so that they can discharge this duty by using their 'reasonable endeavours'.

All modification notices can be found here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/modification-notice-ehc-plans-legislation-changes>

#### **4.2 Timescales for completing EHC needs assessment.**

[Receiving Requests for EHC Needs Assessments](#)

The Government has not relaxed guidelines regarding local authority receipt of requests for Education Health and Care (EHC) Needs Assessments, therefore the SEND Support Service continues to receive them via the Portal from educational providers and directly from parents and young people. The process for health colleagues to notify us of pre-school age children who have or probably have SEND remains unchanged as does the process for other professionals to bring children to our attention.

### Timescales for completion of EHC Needs Assessments

Changes have also been made in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Regulations, temporarily amending the statutory timescales to the EHC Needs Assessment process.

Usually, local authorities are required to complete the process and decide whether an EHC plan will be issued within 20 weeks from receipt of a request for an EHC Needs Assessment. From 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020, the usual timescales will be replaced by requirements on local authorities, health care professionals and others to act **as soon as reasonably practicable**. This will remain in place until 25th September 2020 and the DfE are keeping this under review.

North Tyneside SEND Support Services and partner agencies are actively working to keep any delays to a minimum.

Education, health and care needs assessments and plans: guidance on temporary legislative changes relating to coronavirus (COVID-19) can be read here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-law-on-education-health-and-care-needs-assessments-and-plans-due-to-coronavirus/education-health-and-care-needs-assessments-and-plans-guidance-on-temporary-legislative-changes-relating-to-coronavirus-covid-19>

### EHC Network Meetings

It is the SEND Support Service's local practice to invite partners to an EHC Network Meetings at week nine within the 20-week assessment process. No face to face meetings should take place as a result of this public health crisis. Instead, they will continue by way of Microsoft teams, telephone conferences calls, separate telephone calls, group email and receipt of written reports (this could inform a conference call).

## **5. Education, Health and Care Plan Reviews**

The Government has not relaxed guidelines regarding the requirement for all children and young people with an EHCP to have an Annual EHCP Review or 6 monthly EHCP



Review for those under 5 years. These are to continue and the SEND Support Service will continue to receive and process these.

No face to face meetings should take place as a result of this public health crisis. Meetings can take place via Microsoft teams, telephone conference call, separate telephone calls, group email and receipt of written reports (this could inform a conference call).

Information about North Tyneside SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs Information Advice and Support Service) can be found here

[https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/sites/default/files/web-page-related-files/SENDIASS%20Leaflet%202019\\_1.pdf](https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/sites/default/files/web-page-related-files/SENDIASS%20Leaflet%202019_1.pdf)

Information about NTPCF (North Tyneside Parent Carer Forum) can be found here

<http://www.ntpcf.co.uk/>