

Frequently Asked Questions – Issue 4 SEND support during the Coronavirus pandemic

How does the FAQ work?

- This FAQ shares questions sent into the CDCQuestions@ncb.org.uk email inbox.
- Each week the questions received are collated and shared with the Department for Education (DfE) as well as colleagues with specific areas of expertise within CDC.
- Each FAQ includes questions received before Wednesday lunch time of the week in which it is published.
- If you have submitted a question but cannot see the response below your question is either awaiting feedback from DfE or will be featured in next week's FAQ.
- We may edit some of the questions to allow us to include as many as possible in each weeks FAQ and to protect individuals privacy so your questions may appear slightly differently than your original emails.
- Where questions are on similar themes or have similar answers we may group the questions together.

Guidance and Resources

In addition to this FAQ, we have gathered a list of resources and guidance about Coronavirus related support for disabled children, young people and their families and the practitioners working with them across Education, Health, Social Care and the VCS which you can access [here](#).

For questions relating to specific individual circumstances the **Contact** helpline (0808 808 3555) and [website](#) are an excellent source of information and support.

There has also been new guidance published since the last edition that we would like to draw your attention to. These are:

[Safe working in education, childcare and children's social care](#) (PPE guidance)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings](#)

[Opening schools and educational settings to more pupils from 1 June: guidance for parents and carers](#)

[Actions for education and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1 June 2020](#)

Changes to the law

The Government has announced temporary changes to the law on Education, health and Care (EHC) needs assessments and plans. This is to give local authorities, health commissioning bodies, education settings and others who contribute to these processes more flexibility in responding to the demands placed on them by coronavirus. You can read more about the changes and download the guidance here:

<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/news-opinion/news/temporary-changes-law-education-health-and-care-needs-assessments-and-plans>

Questions on education:

Q

My daughter has an Education, Health and Care plan but we have been urged against sending her to school. The teachers stressed that children would not be learning. As I am working full time from home I have kept her home with me. I am a single parent working full time from home trying to support my daughter's additional needs and I am worried she may regress. I have contacted the school and asked for a once a week video call as I feel this would be a good way for my child to develop social skills. I have had no response from the school. The school have not sent any printed work to any parents in the supposed resource unit and we only received a short call from the class teacher last week. The website doesn't have the appropriate resources and worksheets for my daughter. Instead there are links to useful apps and a suggested time table. She is also due to transition to a special school in September. I am waiting to find out if she will get transport and also if she will get to see her old school friends and visit her new school by September. My daughter has high anxiety levels and gets anxious and becomes physical when I mention her new school. I need some advice on how I can try and make things easier on her.

All the children in my child's school get free school meals I haven't been contacted to see if she requires food or vouchers. She does have a number of sensory issues around eating which is why it is probably more important to offer some support.

A

We are sorry that you haven't had the response that you need. Your local authority should have carried out a risk assessment for your daughter to see whether or not she should be at school and to agree what provision she should have whether at school or at home. You can contact your local authority to ask that these things are done and to clarify the transition arrangements. Your local SEND IASS can also offer help and support on this:

<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/information-advice-and-support-services-network/find-your-local-ias-service>

Q

I have a query concerning deaf children; many of them need lip reading and/or a radio aid system to enable them to access their learning. Face masks would make lip reading impossible and would also impede the effectiveness of a radio aid system. Is the government (or anyone) thinking about their needs should face masks be made mandatory in order to allow schools to open again? I realise face masks may not be required but I thought I would raise the issue just in case this is being considered.

A

Thank you for raising this. The National Deaf Children's Society will certainly be thinking about this and you can find their website here <https://www.ndcs.org.uk/> and their helpline details in the attached SEN Organisations contact sheet. We are aware from conversations with Speech and Language Therapists that they are also concerned about this in clinical sessions and that there is an option of a transparent mask to address these difficulties should masks be required.

Q

I am working with several families who have a young person who is Home Educated (EHE). They were due to complete their GCE's this year. Can I ask, what happens in regards to grading their work? What if their coursework is not complete? Are they able to participate in exams later to ensure they receive fair grades? If the parents have paid for their exams and unable to get a refund, what should they do? (From SEND IAS service)

A

Thank you for your questions about home educated students. The Department for Education (DfE) have recently published guidance in relation to exam grades. To read the guidance in full, please visit the official DfE website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020>

Below is an extract from the website:

"What about private candidates or home educated students?"

Where schools and colleges have accepted entries from external candidates (students who they have not taught themselves, because they have been home-educated, following distance-learning programmes or studying independently), those students should be taken account of in the process of producing centre assessment grades, where the head teacher or principal is confident that they and their staff have seen sufficient evidence of the student's achievement to make an objective judgement.

Ofqual and the exam boards have been exploring the options for those students who do not have an existing relationship with an exams centre and who need results this summer for progression purposes. The Joint Council for Qualifications has published some [guidance for exam centres on accepting private candidates](#) which sets out the options that will be available. Unfortunately, not all external candidates will be able to be awarded a calculated grade this summer because some will not be in a position to provide sufficient evidence to enable their exam centre to include them in their centre

assessment grades and rankings. Students in this position will need to sit exams to get their grades, either in the autumn or in summer 2021.

Ofqual has asked organisations that represent higher and further education providers to consider the steps that providers could take when making admissions decisions this summer for any private candidates who do not receive a grade. They have said that they believe that institutions will consider a range of other evidence and information for these students to allow them to progress wherever possible."



We have a 6 year old child with Autism, Global Development Delay, Sensory Processing Disorder and Benign Joint Hypermobility Syndrome. She has an EHCP and goes to a local mainstream primary school. She was originally given a place at school during lockdown however the night before she was due to go we were sent an email from the school telling us not to send her as there was no provision for her. We were left with no choice but to home-school her despite both myself and my husband being full time key workers. We have had minimal contact from school during this period and all her outside support and therapies have stopped with no contact so we are now left on our own with no support.

Can the school be allowed to do what they have done knowing full well our child has an EHCP? Would it be different if our child was in a special school? What will happen to all the funding provided through the EHCP for the support and therapy she is not getting? Why haven't we had any contact from outside i.e. SEND during this time.



This must have been exceptionally difficult for you and we are sorry that you have had no support. We have been raising with NHS England the issue of therapy provision and new guidance should be issued shortly that will hopefully ensure that more provision becomes available.

Your local authority should have carried out a risk assessment for your daughter to see whether or not she should be at school and to agree what provision she should have whether at school or at home. You can contact your local authority to ask that these things are done and your local SEND IASS can help. You can find their contact details here:

<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/information-advice-and-support-services-network/find-your-local-ias-service>

Q

I would like you to ask the government for clarity regarding disabled children on the vulnerable list, not on the extremely vulnerable list, with regards to the plan for them when schools reopen. Although my son is not on the extremely vulnerable list, with cerebral palsy, chronic lung disease, and an immature immune system, I will in no way feel confident at returning him to school when the general lockdown lifts. There will be thousands of children on the vulnerable list so what are the proposals for these children?

My second question is what policies are going to be made to inform employers and staff of the rights for those caring for disabled children on the vulnerable list? For example is it going to be allowed for parents and carers to continue to work from home for a longer period or be furloughed even if they are civil servants?

A

Thank you for your questions. We can appreciate how concerning this situation must be for you and your son. We are still working on the detail of your second question and will publish this as soon as we've sought clarity. In relation to your first question, the DfE have published "Opening schools and educational settings to more pupils from 1 June: guidance for parents and carers" along with a set of and FAQs. You can view the full guidance on the DfE website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

Below is an extract from the website:

"Should I keep my child at home if they have an underlying health condition or live with someone in a clinically vulnerable group?"

Children and young people who are considered extremely clinically vulnerable and shielding should continue to shield and should not be expected to attend.

Clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable) people are those considered to be at a higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus. A minority of children will fall into this category, and parents should follow medical advice if their child is in this category.

Children and young people who live in a household with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable and shielding should only attend if stringent social distancing can be adhered to and the child or young person is able to understand and follow those instructions.

Children and young people who live with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not extremely clinically vulnerable) as defined in the [social distancing guidance](#) and including those who are pregnant, can attend."

Q

My son is 18 and attends a special school. I am wondering whether disabled young people of secondary age will return to school at the same time as primary aged children as the same arguments apply (e.g. difficult to cope with, need attention, prohibit parents from working). Also many parents will be desperate for respite by now.

A

Thank you for this question. There are currently limited plans for secondary pupils to have some face-to-face support from their teachers but these only apply to pupils in year groups who will be doing exams next year. There are no other plans for secondary aged pupils to return to school in June or July. However your local authority should have carried out a risk assessment for your son and should have agreed how he will be supported at school or how he will be supported at home, if he is not in school.
