



Bolton Information and Advisory Service, SEND Weekly Bulletin – 3rd April 2020

Text for support- 07467943495

24 hour email- iasoutofhours@outlook.com

www.iasbolton.com

COVID-19 and Bolton SEND- what's going on?

We wanted to keep you up to date with what we know about how the recent pandemic is affecting SEN here in Bolton and nationally in terms of law and processes. We also wanted to let you know how IAS and BPC are linking up more than ever to help you through this incredibly stressful time.

What has happened this week?

Not a great deal has changed in terms of guidance from the government this week affecting SEND. However, there are some important updates we wanted to share with you.

Update on government response with regard to educational matters

The government has worked with Ofqual to firm up plans on how pupils will receive examination grades and released information on 3rd April. The parent carer guide can be accessed by [clicking here](#)

A gentle reminder on social distancing

The government has been clear in how it expects all of us to be behaving to help reduce the spread of Coronavirus. In essence, we should all stay home, aside from essential travel for work, food or medicine. We are allowed one outing a day for exercise, and this should be in our immediate local area. Despite this, there are reports on social media that groups of children are still being seen out and about together.

We understand that having children cooped up at home all day can be a challenge, but please be mindful that children should not be playing out with friends. Children should also not be taking their daily exercise with children from other households, even if none are displaying symptoms.

Update on the Coronavirus Act 2020

Last week we told you the COVID-19 Bill had been passed as the Coronavirus Act 2020. This allows LA's and other bodies flexibility in their approach to how they work with and deliver services to children and families. However, we also noted that the Act hasn't changed anything for SEND at this exact moment in time. The Secretary of State has not yet given notice to allow LAs to relax their duties under the Children and families Act 2014. We were hopeful to have an update on this for you, but the notice still hasn't been declared.

As such, we still recommend a common sensical approach to dealing with all matters SEND at this time. Everyone is doing their best under very difficult circumstances. There are some things that are simply not possible to do at this current time.

SEND Tribunals

The SEND Tribunal is still operating- albeit on reduced staff and by different ways of working than they normally would.

Appeals can still be registered, and any scheduled hearings etc will still go ahead- although they will not be face to face. Cases are being heard either 'on the papers', or by video/ telephone link. If you have an active case and need further support or guidance, please email Cheryl-ppsbolton@outlook.com, and we will talk you through your options.

Mediation

Together Trust, who provide the mediation service in Bolton, are still operating. The service is trying to hold mediations by video where possible. If you have a mediation booked, you should contact them to discuss how yours may work. Their email address is drs@togethertrust.org.uk. If a video mediation is not something you wish to do/ are able to do, you can request your mediation certificate instead and proceed with your appeal. However, we would always suggest that you contact the Bolton SEND team to speak to your officer about this first. The SEND team can be reached at ea.sen@bolton.gov.uk. Please note, this team are working remotely too- so please allow reasonable time for someone to come back to you.

The Local government and social care Ombudsman

The LGO have suspended all complaints for the time being. As such, unless you've already registered your complaint with them, it will not be accepted at this time. They welcome you to make your complaint once they have recommenced their service, and will consider each case on an individual basis, regardless of the timescale. Complaints

already made and that are ongoing, will also be suspended. You can check their page for updates on their service here www.lgo.org.uk/announcement

Reminder on support available to you now

The IAS website, www.iasbolton.com continues to build on its dedicated page about Coronavirus. Here, you can find:

- All the latest government, council, and IAS information and advice on what's happening
- A learning hub with downloads and links to different learning experiences, for both mainstream and SEND children, with additions from our friends at Ladywood School.
- Links to useful websites for parents and carers
- Social stories for children about the virus and changes
- Toolkits for managing at home
- Activity suggestions for children and young people

IAS and BPC are holding coffee mornings by Zoom to help keep you all connected. At each one, a member of the parent carer forum, and an IAS officer will be there to help give information and advice. These are every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, from 11.30am until 12.30pm. To find out how easy it is to access the coffee morning, visit www.boltonparents.org.uk/join-in

Our 'natter and listen' service is still here for anyone who needs it- whether you just need some adult conversation, need to let off some steam, want some advice or reassurance, or just someone to talk about your day, we are here. Simply text 07467943495 and we will arrange a call back for you whenever you want to talk.

Video link workshops- using 'Zoom', Cheryl and Nan will continue delivering FREE legally informed workshops- with some new and exciting updates and additions! Usual booking rules apply. After Easter, we have two dates set, a daytime session on 17th April, and an evening session on 23rd April. More information will be available at www.boltonparents.org.uk/cv

The usual IAS service- although we are all working from home, we can continue to offer telephone and email support, advice and guidance for anything SEND related- whether you've got EHC forms to complete, want to know about anything education, health or social care related, or to chat through your concerns for when the schools go back, get in touch using our 24 hour email address- iasoutofhours@outlook.com and we will call you back.

Updates from the council

- Food packages are being delivered to those extremely vulnerable people who have been asked to stay indoors for 12 weeks (shielding), who have no other means of support. The support is available through the council's Response Hub, which has been set up by the council and partners. If you are struggling because you need to stay at home and have no family or friends to support you, with shopping or other help, please contact the council on 01204 337221
- During the current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic it is particularly important that children and families are still vaccinated against serious diseases, such as measles and meningitis. Babies and toddlers need vaccinations to protect them from many infections including measles, mumps, rubella (MMR), rotavirus, diphtheria, whooping cough, meningitis, polio, tetanus, tuberculosis and more. Families and children should continue to receive vaccinations offered through the Childhood Immunisation Programme so that there is no resurgence of these highly infectious diseases in our communities and to protect the most vulnerable.
- The Government has issued updated guidance on free school meals. This can be found on their website. A national voucher scheme has been set up for those schools that cannot provide pupils with meals or food parcels.
- Bolton Council are making the call for you to join them as the UK battles through its worse health crisis of a generation. They are looking for people to fill a variety of care roles within Adult Services - Care Assistants, Night Care Assistants and Home Support Workers. If you have any hours to spare, week days, weekends or evenings please complete the application form on the greater jobs website and submit it as soon as possible. They are also looking for Qualified Social Workers to join their Safeguarding service in casual roles, with a variety of hours available. Please complete the application form on the greater jobs website and submit it as soon as possible if you can help.
- Bolton Council's main homepage is now dedicated to directing you to the most current information required by residents www.bolton.gov.uk

We hope this is helpful. We will be back in touch every Friday with a weekly update. If you would prefer not to receive this, please just let us know. In the meantime, please do make use of the care package on offer to help support you through this time.

Stay well and look after each other,

Cheryl and the IAS team, and Nan and BPC