



Bolton Parent Carers & Bolton Information Advisory Service

Working together for Bolton's SEND families

We will 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 challenging time.

Bolton Information Advisory Service

Text: 07467 943495

Web: www.iasbolton.com

Email: iasoutofhours@outlook.com

Bolton Parent Carers

Web: www.boltonparents.org.uk

Email: info@boltonparents.org.uk



New this week: There have been a couple of updates this week concerning children and SEND. There has been government guidance issued on what will happen with National Offer day 2020 (primary schools), additional support for Adoptive children, and children going outside for daily exercise.

Guidance updates this week states individuals with learning difficulties and disabilities can take more than one outing outside the family home, for daily exercise if this helps with their condition. The guidance adds that this should *ideally* be supported by some type of 'plan'. There are several lawyers, including Steve Broach seeking clarification on this and how it can and can't be proved that multiple excursions are required for an individual's condition. We would however, remind you that this guidance needs to be weighed against the benefit of staying home as much as you possibly can. Everyone is considered safer at home.

The government has also this week, issued information on primary school allocations. These will go ahead as planned, with parents of nursery aged children expecting to start school this September, being allocated their school place on 16th April. The government is aware that every year, some parents and carers appeal their allocated primary school. The government have said they are working to push through more guidance about how appeals can still happen, and are open to panels and appeal hearings happening remotely, and to extend the timeframe for appeal. We hope to have more information on this for you as soon as it becomes available to us.

Finally, in terms of government update this week, we have also been told that adoptive families will be offered emergency support, including online counselling, and couples therapy. The government has made available £8 million to pay for additional therapeutic support for adoptive children, who may have already experienced trauma and who are now being affected by the anxiety surrounding COVID-19. The money will be made available to adoption agencies and Local Authorities, with flexibility given to them to meet the needs of adoptive children in their area. You should speak to your social worker or named professional if you feel this is something you may be able to benefit from.



Updates from Bolton CCG:



Bolton

Clinical Commissioning Group

Currently, all assessments for Autism and ADHD have been put on hold until further notice. This includes BSCIP. We expect that when measures relax, these will reconvene, but as you might appreciate, we cannot give a date for this as yet.

Some health based clinic appointments are operating, but remotely, by phone for example. Some are not operating at all currently. If your child has medical appointments booked, and you haven't had an update, you should call the team directly to see if the appointment is being held remotely, or is cancelled. All teams and services are working differently, so it is best to check with them individually.

Dealing with anxiety at this time- children and young people can access a free service online called Kooth. Kooth is a provider of online mental health services for children, young people and adults. Kooth, from XenZone, is an online counselling and emotional well-being platform for children and young people, accessible through mobile, tablet and desktop and free at the point of use. For more information, go to www.kooth.com



Update from Bolton Council Educational Psychology service (EP's)

Bolton Council's educational psychology team are looking at the different ways that they can help support both families and schools at this difficult time. We have been in discussions with them about what this might be, and how best to ensure we can get it out to you all. The EPs are looking to:

- Provide advice and guidance to schools and settings
- Have a weekly featured piece in our bulletin for families, focusing on specific themes relevant to you all, with helpful hints and support
- A helpline for families where you can get advice and guidance from the educational psychologists

This work is still under development, but we hope to bring you the updates next week. If you have ideas on the types of things you would find useful to help you through this period, or any pressing concerns your dealing with at the moment, please do get in touch and we can pass them on to the team.



Support from Bolton Parent Carers and Bolton IAS:

Both the IAS and BPC websites have a wide range of resources and information to keep you up to date and busy throughout this time. You can find us at www.iasbolton.com and

www.boltonparents.org.uk

IAS and BPC are holding coffee mornings by Zoom. 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. For info visit www.boltonparents.org.uk/join-in

Our IAS '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 call a friend 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. Cheryl, Nan, Mike and Karen are happy to help wherever we can.

We will soon be delivering webinar workshops via Zoom. These are currently being developed, and, as soon as we have perfected them and tested them out on the new software, we shall send out the dates and booking links.

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 be in touch.



HM Courts &
Tribunals Service

A reminder about appeals:

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.

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 (LGO) have also 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. If you have an active appeal of any kind please email iasoutofhour@outlook.com if you need further support or guidance and we will talk you through your options.



Support from Bolton Council

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, help is available through the council's Response Hub, which has been set up by the council and partners.



Need support?

Our COVID 19 community response line is now open offering vital help to people who need food or essential items

01204 337221

8.30am – 5.30pm Mon – Fri and Sat 9am – 1.30pm
Easter Monday 10am - 4pm

Bolton Council website has updated their homepage with all necessary links for residents during this time - whether it's bin collections, finance, health all the links are in the homepage - www.bolton.gov.uk

On a final note

We are sure you have heard the sad news that our friend and colleague, Elaine Nuttall, has sadly lost both her dad Frank, and also her Nan, to heart-breaking battles with Coronavirus this week.. As a family we know so well, this really does bring home to us here at IAS and BPC, the stark reality of how serious this situation is, and how it can touch any of us.



Elaine wants to share with you how important it is, that even though the sun is shining and there might be temptation to drop our guard, break social distancing rules and to meet with our friends and family, staying home and protecting yourselves and the ones you love far outweighs everything else.

We are sure your all with us when we send Elaine and her family our thoughts, prayers and love at this very difficult time.



We will be back in touch next Friday with a weekly update. Please do share this bulletin with anyone you feel it may help. If you would prefer not to receive our bulletin, please just let us know.

In the meantime, please do make use of the joint IAS/BPC support package mentioned to help you through this time.

Stay well and look after each other, ask for support if you need it, and most importantly, #stayhome

Cheryl and the IAS team
and Nan and BPC