



Bolton Parent Carers & Bolton Information Advisory Service

Working together for Bolton's SEND families

Joint Bulletin 9 - 15th May 2020

What has happened this week?

This week has been a funny old week hasn't it?! Since Sundays announcement, there has been confusion and concern. We have been inundated with more guidance about the relaxing of the social distancing measures, and the expectations on education settings reopening. We know this divides opinion too! We've another bumper edition, which will hopefully provide some clarity on this weeks burning issues, as well as lots of other bits and pieces and little nuggets of info you might need. Enjoy!



The 'possible' re opening of educational settings on Monday 1st June

'Guided by the science', the government wants to see children of all ages make a gradual return to school. We *might* find that, *if infection rates fall in the way it is hoped*, that on Monday 1st June, all types of settings are being asked to prepare to welcome some children back. This will not happen before this date, and this date could also be pushed back. However, lets say it IS to go ahead, you're probably wondering what this will look like, and what it means for your child. The following is all based on umbrella guidance for settings, this isn't SEND information. All decisions made as to whether children return to their setting will be on an individual basis, taking into account their circumstances. For children and young people with EHC Plans, again it will be based on the individual. This is whether they are based in mainstream or special setting. There are different groups of children potentially going back in to different settings, to make it easier, you can see if your child would return on June 1st, in the chart below:

| | |
|--|---|
| Childminders | Taking all children of all ages back |
| Nurseries | Taking all nursery children back |
| Primary Schools | Taking children in reception, year 1, and year 6 |
| Secondary Schools | Offering face to face support for year 10 students |
| Post 16 mainstream provision (inc colleges and 6 th form) | Offering face to face support for year 12 students |
| Alternative providers (PRU's/ other educational settings) | Taking children in year 1, year 6, year 10, and year 11 |
| Special Schools (primary, secondary, and post 16) | Not looking at specific year groups- phased return for more children based on risk assessments of individuals |

This is in addition to children who already attend as their parent(s) are keyworkers, or they fit the definition of vulnerable.



If your child is in one of these groups due to return on June 1st, it is unlikely the place will be offered full time like it was before lockdown. This is because the government have set out lengthy guidance to educational providers which says they have to do lots of things to keep children and staff safe. This includes fewer pupils to keep numbers down, groups of children staying in the same group where possible, to prevent them mixing with lots of other children, to be able to allow enough space for social distancing, and to account for the fact that it is likely there will be staff absences due to sickness/ isolating etc.

By allowing these specific groups of children to return to school in some capacity, it enables children in year 6 due to transition to high school to get support with this, children due to move from nursery to school, will get more support, and for older children, it allows for preparation for exams next year, and to prevent falling behind in their studies.

Settings are also taking stringent measures to ensure they are running as safely as possible. Things might be a little different for you and your child, and it may take some getting used to. These things may include;

- Staggered start and finish times to avoid crowds on the playground
- Short days/ shorter school week to allow for deep cleaning
- Removing some things/ activities from the environment
- Stringent hygiene routines for staff and children
- Possibly not having anyone on school premises who doesn't absolutely have to be there—parents and carers may be included in this too
- Changes to the curriculum delivery (ie what can and cant be done)
- A focus on mental health and wellbeing of pupils

What about the children not in these groups? For all other children, they will remain at home for now, until we move into 'phase 3' of the governments relaxation measures. At the earliest, phase 3 could be early July 2020, but again, the government will want to phase children in, and could well push back the date further if the virus spikes again.

What about getting to school if you are allowed to send your child? The government wants us all to avoid enclosed spaces with others wherever possible, and this includes transport. If you are able, you are asked to walk or cycle to your setting. If you have a family car, this is ok too. Using buses and taxi's should be avoided if possible, and if you do have to use these types of transport, you are asked to take appropriate measures to keep yourselves safe. This might be different if your child accesses local authority transport, because they go to a special school for example. We will bring you more information on this next week.

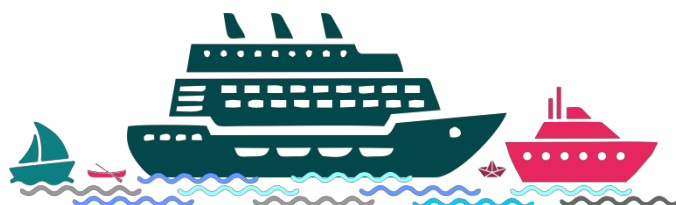
Do I have to send my child? In short, No. You don't. There are plenty of arguments for and against (if you're on social media, no doubt you'll have seen them!), however if you choose not to send your child, the action that would *usually* be implemented would be to impose fines and action on parents for not sending children to school—and this is still suspended currently. You will therefore not face any action for not sending your child to school at this stage.

Changing times, relaxing of restrictions and schools opening....

We are aware that for many families the slight relaxation of restrictions and talk of schools re-opening is giving us all a lot to think about, as well as a lot of chat on social media!

There's a phrase that has been mentioned a few times over the last few weeks "we're all the same boat..." And in some respects that is true; we are all living in a world that is experiencing the Covid-19 pandemic. But our boats are all very different and the seas we are navigating are also very different. We just wanted to take a moment to talk about the experiences of families, and how no one is right and no one is wrong. Over coming weeks, as schools potentially open, you may have differing views and make different choices to others and that should be respected. Some families will be experiencing lockdown as a relief - school can be a factor of their child's life that brings anxiety, refusal and challenging behaviours. Being at home for them is a break from this cycle. For some children not accessing their usual setting is very disruptive and is causing difficult times at home. Some parents are juggling attempting to work from home as well as manage their SEN children. Some families have been affected financially in ways they cannot see a way out. And we can't ever forget that for some families they have lost loved ones in the most tragic of circumstances.

Returning to school/nursery/college is a decision that is based on your child or young person and their individual needs. Unfortunately what we don't have is a whole lot of concrete scientific evidence to help you with your decisions, it is down to personal opinion. Which is why we ask that over coming weeks, you respect one another's decisions. It is completely valid to want to remain cocooned, whilst at the same time, remember, no one is going to purposefully put their child or family in harms way. As parents, we know how well our boat is currently sailing, we may be navigating the seas in the best way that we can, or we may be bailing out sea water as our boat is full of holes. Everyone's child's SEN are different, everyone is experiencing this differently. Everyone is doing their best!



Bolton Council Bolton Council Educational Psychology Service Helpline

The EP helpline continues to operate. You can call them to discuss, for example, any concerns or questions you may have about your child and their education, or any matters regarding supporting them, meeting need, helping with emotional health in children. As mentioned previously, the helpline numbers have now changed.

This numbers and days from Monday 18th - Friday 29th May:

Monday 9am - 12.30pm: 07768 352728

Wednesday 1pm - 5pm: 07919564919

Friday 9am - 12.30pm: 07766780373

We also have this week's newsletter from Bolton's educational psychology team for you at the end of the bulletin. This week's topic is bereavement.



Reminder on support available to you now

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. Each one is usually hosted by Frankie from Bolton Parent Carers. These are every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, from 11.30am until 12.30pm. For more information 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.

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.



Free School Meals

When schools closed, the government pledged that all children entitled to free school meals would continue to have this provided. This is the entitlement to free school meals if you meet financial criteria, as opposed to the universal infant free school meals scheme.

At the start it was expected that schools would be the providers of food—be it daily or weekly access. And if this wasn't possible in the long term, that a national scheme would be used to allocate shopping vouchers to parents.

Some schools in Bolton have continued to provide food to families, some have been accessing the voucher scheme. Sadly the voucher scheme has not coped with demand and schools have found it a struggle to do the necessary registering which allows parents to then be able to access the vouchers.

The voucher scheme entitles families to £15 per week, and in most cases, once schools can get it working, it will be backdated. However, if your school was providing an option for you to access food, and you didn't use their offer, it is possible you won't get backdated. Some schools are planning on providing food for the duration and not relying on the voucher scheme. The best thing to do is check your school's communication channels, and contact them with any queries.

If you are struggling, please do contact school. There may be ways they can support you. You can also contact Bolton's humanitarian hub for support.



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

SEN Support

Is your child starting primary school in September?

Do they have special educational needs, but you don't have an EHC plan?

We are setting dates to hold two **virtual workshops** on the legal framework SEN support, for children starting school without an EHC plan. This could be because your child doesn't require a Plan, but may need extra help, or maybe a plan is still being assessed. There will be a daytime and evening session. As always, they are free to all, and delivered by Cheryl from IAS and Nan from BPC. To register your interest, please visit www.boltonparents.org.uk/sen-support-webinar/ and then we will notify you when we have dates and how to book.



When you join us for a virtual workshop you can watch on a PC, tablet or smartphone. You can see us, hear us and see our presentation—but we can't see or hear you! So you can relax and not worry about being on screen or the kids making noise! You can ask us questions as we go along through a chat function on the webinar.



Family Fund applications

Family Fund is the UK's largest charity providing grants for families raising disabled or seriously ill children and young people. Last year, they provided 89,101 grants or services worth over £33 million to families across the UK. Grant applications are **still open**, and are still being processed, but there may be delays to your application given the COVID pandemic.



Mental health awareness week

Next week is mental health awareness week. Our friends at Ladywood Outreach have devised a great resource for us to share with our families. It can be found on by clicking— [Mental health PDF](#) It's got ideas for helping children talk about feelings and lots of links to support mental health.

Local Updates



There is a Covid-19 testing site in Bolton, for essential workers, the list of which has now expanded. For information on booking a test and whether you qualify visit www.bolton.gov.uk/covidtesting



Heaton Fold
Garden Centre

Heaton Fold Garden centre re-opens to the public on 15th May, social distancing in operation. For more information visit www.bolton.gov.uk/news/



Bolton's 2 tips are re-opening. There are restrictions in place for when you can visit and what you can take, so please visit www.recycleforgreatermanchester.com/ before you set off!



The Start Well EY SEND team have worked with a range of partners and collated some resources which might help parents and carers at home during the COVID- 19 pandemic with young children who have SEND. We hope that they can be used to support and offer ideas at this very challenging time. Special thanks to the team at Green Fold Special School (Part of the Orchards Federation) for their contribution to this project.

Exploring the Senses—click on the blue links...

[Fun with Food](#) – Fun with food helps children with aversions to gain more confidence by encouraging children's exploration to new foods. This will hopefully, then add a wider variety of food into the children's diet. Includes symbols to help you get started. (Please use resources/ food selections with caution and always under adult supervision).

[Make your own sensory kit at home!](#) – Variety the children's charity have created a guide for parent carers of children and young people for whom sensory activities will help them to manage their sensory inputs more effectively. (Please use resources with caution and always under adult supervision).

[Sensory Sessions](#) - Catherine Brooks is a Teaching Assistant from Green Fold Special School (Part of the Orchards Federation) these are her 'simple sensory sessions' that last about 20 minutes. They are designed to stimulate 1 or 2 senses each time. (Please use resources with caution and always under adult supervision)

[For more parent support resources including FAQ's, Home Learning, Internet Safety, Physical, Exploring the Senses and Strategies, click here to visit the Start Well website.](#)



Your experiences...

Our questionnaire remains open to find out how families are managing, We are very interested to hear your experiences and your concerns going forward. We will use your responses from this questionnaire when we are in discussion with SEND leaders locally. Please do take a few minutes to tell us your views.... [Access the questionnaire by clicking here](#)



We will be back in touch next Friday with our next update. In the meantime, please do make use of the joint IAS/BPC support package mentioned. All past copies of these bulletins can be found [online](#)

Stay well and look after each other,,

Cheryl and the IAS team, and Nan and BPC



Bolton Educational Psychology Service

Council Newsletter – 15th May 2020

How to explain to your child when someone has died from the coronavirus

Introduction Due to the coronavirus pandemic, there is an increased chance of a relative, friend or someone in the community dying. Like adults, children will react in different ways when experiencing grief and loss. Their responses to bereavement will depend on their age, understanding and relationship to the person who has died. This newsletter provides advice on how to talk to children and young people when someone has died, activities to help them say goodbye and ideas to look after yourself.

Telling your child someone has died

Tell your child as soon as possible so they hear it from you rather than someone else even a very young child will still need information about what has happened

Helping your child to understand

- Consider the words you use, their age and level of understanding. Use words such as 'died' and 'dead', being clear about what has happened
- Avoid using words such as 'gone away', 'gone to sleep' and 'lost them' as this can cause confusion
- Give a little bit of information at a time – this will allow time for it to be digested, older children will be able to handle more information at any one time
- Encourage your child to ask questions and be guided by them
- Be open and honest, it's ok to say you don't know the answer to all their question or that it's too difficult to answer that question at the current time
- They may ask the same questions repeatedly and ask for more detail each time. This will be helping them to understand what has happened
- Discussing the life cycle or looking at a storybook that involves death may help. Suggestions of books can be found on the following website www.childbereavementuk.org



If your child is worried about other family members

- Explain the coronavirus is often mild and most people recover.
- Be honest and say that some people do die and avoid making promises e.g. 'Grandma will be fine'
- Give them comfort – tell them they are loved and supported

Bolton Educational Psychology Service

Bolton Council Newsletter – 15th May 2020

Supporting your child to express themselves

Some children may bottle up their feelings because they don't want to upset others. Let them know:

- That you are available to listen if they want to talk, but it's ok if they don't.
- There is no right or wrong time to talk about it – it could be at bedtime when this is the quietest part of the day.
- It is normal to experience different emotions (one minute they may be upset and the next happy.)
- It is ok to cry or to laugh about your happy experiences with that person
- If they don't wish to talk, they could express themselves in other ways e.g. drawing or writing
- Some children may become angry or withdrawn – they will return to their usual behaviour in time
- If they are feeling guilt or shame, reassure them it is not their fault and if they were angry or mean to this person, this was not the cause of what has happened
- Younger children may make up stories using their toys or act it out
- Spend time with your child doing things you both enjoy e.g. going for a walk or watching a film



Activities to do with your child

- drawing themselves with the person
- writing a poem
- listening to music that reminds them of the person
- having a photograph of the person
- having a keep sake that belonged to the person



Looking after yourself

It is normal to go through a range of emotions from being shocked, to disbelieving, being upset and feeling angry / confused. It may take a while for these emotions to stop affecting you but they will ease over time. Ideas to look after yourself:

- Talk to people about what has happened.
- If you don't feel like talking, you could write it down or draw.
- Do an activity you enjoy.
- Relaxation exercises e.g. slowing down your breathing, body scan.
- Gentle exercise.
- An activity such as a jigsaw, reading a book / magazine or listening to music.

Bolton Council Bolton Educational Psychology Service

Newsletter – 15th May 2020

Saying goodbye

Due to the restrictions on attending funerals, children and young people are probably unlikely to be have the choice about whether they wish to attend. Here are a number of other ways they could say goodbye:

- make a memorial (a plant or tree)
- having a memory box with special items, photos and written memories
- having a memorial service at a later date - children can help plan this over time
- lighting a candle and sharing special memories
- during the funeral, an order of service can be followed at home
- some places of worship are live streaming funerals so people can watch them and say their goodbyes from home
- contribute a poem, toy or something meaningful to be placed on the coffin



The latest advice on funerals from the National Association of Funeral Directors can be found on: <https://nafdcovid19.org.uk>

Websites and support

Grief Encounter Offers support for bereaved children and has a helpline called 'griefftalk' for children and young people www.griefencounter.org.uk 0808 802 0111

Kooth A service for 11-18 year olds. It offers online counselling and chat forums with other young people www.kooth.com 01204 546010

Adult support

Silverwellbeing Bereavement Service (for 16 years and over) www.1pointbolton.org.uk/
or phone 01204 917745

Cruse Bereavement Care www.cruse.org.uk/ 0808 808 1677

Educational Psychology Service
Schools ICT
Smithills Dean Road

The Educational Psychology Service can help with additional information, references and suggestions. Please contact

www.bolton.gov.uk [f boltoncouncil](https://www.facebook.com/boltoncouncil) [t boltoncouncil](https://twitter.com/boltoncouncil)

Bolton Council

Our values are who we are...
Accountable, determined, making a difference, honest and respectful. We work together.



I LOVE BOLTON BECAUSE...



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