

Dated: 1/09/2020

Email to SENDcos EHCP Consultation documents

Dear colleagues,

I hope that the start of terms runs as smoothly as possible for you and your pupils. I cannot recall a summer holiday where education has been in the media so frequently.

We have tried to keep communications to a minimum over the summer so it is likely that you will receive more emails than usual in the next few weeks. Please do look out for emails and information in the Head teachers newsletters.

Thank you to all educational settings for your continued support for the SEN team over the last academic year and in particular during the COVID period. The team have continued their rapid improvement journey and are making sound progress in relation to the mile stones in the written statement of action published after our local area SEND OFSTED inspection.

Systems are beginning to work well and you will notice that increased numbers of EHC plans are being issued. As more plans are issued you will also notice that you are receiving increased numbers of requests for information and consultations, all of which require a response within a statutory 15 day deadline. This is a clear sign that the new system is working but does mean that we respectfully request your ongoing assistance in the assessment phase, the draft writing and also in finalising the plans by responding within this timeframe.

During the summer the SEN team have continued to make good progress in relation to issuing EHCPs within the 20 week time frame. With schools closed over the summer holidays, and many of you therefore unable to respond to the team's requests for information, including consults for placements, the team have 'paused' some cases in accordance with the SEND legislation's exception rule. However, the legislation allows for delay only until schools open, and this means that on the 1st September, the legislative clock starts ticking again and schools are required by law to respond to the request.

Since the end of term, the team have sent over 100 requests for information and placement consultations to educational settings. The exception regulations state that settings then have 15 calendar days from the start of term to respond. This is a legal requirement of the SEND Code of Practice and the children and families Act.

The SEN team will be sending reminders at the beginning of term, and are very aware of the difficult circumstances that schools face as they reopen.

To ensure that the local authority is able to finalise plans in the statutory 20 week time frame we need to ask that educational settings fulfil their statutory duties and respond to any requests and consultations within 15 days. We fully appreciate the challenges you face in September, but ask our SENDCOs and senior leaders to build some time into their working week to respond within the given timeframe to ensure we can fulfil our obligations to parents and carers and meet the needs of their children.

Please do liaise with your case officers for further information and guidance.

Thank you again for working with us to improve SEND services across our local area.

With best wishes

Dr Vikki Jervis

Head of Service Accessible City and Principal Educational Psychologist

Bristol City Council

