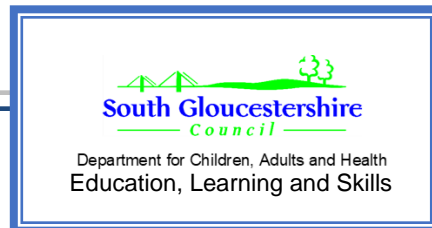


COVID19 SENCO Newsletter

Issue 1



This is the first in a hopefully short series of newsletters for SENCOs and Headteachers written jointly by ELS and the Inclusion and Behaviour Support Service teams.



In the current emergency situation the safest place for a child to be in order to not have the virus is their home. Some parents may still wish their child to attend school and should be aware that although schools are closing, some are making arrangements for vulnerable children including children with EHCPs and others children such as children in need.

SEN Co-ordination

Given the situation, the role of SENCO is key. Supporting colleagues who may not know the children they are working with mean that your planning, communication and advice is vital. If you are self-isolating, this may also present challenges and we are here to support you during this difficult time. We have already had some SENCOs volunteer their expertise to support pupils with SEND across our authority, where their school doesn't need their capacity. We are co-ordinating a list and you can email faye.bertham@southglos.gov.uk if you find you may be able to help.

Supporting your colleagues

Ensure that there is easily accessible information on what works for the children with SEN in your school. Efficient access to this information will be important over the coming weeks, for pupils who have an EHCP. This can be your pupil profile/passport and supporting documentation. These will give a picture of where the child is working and the approach the child responds to.

Update this information if needed, these are working documents, they don't have to be pretty they just need to be clear. Bear in mind that this may also need to move with the child to other schools or be understood by a different adult working with a pupil who has an EHCP.

Identify essential equipment e.g. ear defenders, communication aids, sensory toys, make them available.

Trouble shoot – we need to try not to put children in situations where we know they will struggle. Pupil passports will help adults know what works and what doesn't work for the child and what any potential triggers might be.

Parents of pupils with EHCPs

- Parents may be concerned about how we will meet children's needs. If this is the case and if it is possible, please endeavour to talk this through with parents. We need to be clear what we can and can't do in these circumstances and then decide jointly with parents and children, what our approach will be. Changes of environment, staffing, the structure of the day and the activities happening in school will adversely affect lots of our children. If we work with parents to mitigate these circumstances, we will have the best chance of meeting their needs.
- For pupils with SEND who are working at home, we know that this will present challenges for parents and carers. Consider what resources you send home and what tasks you are asking them to do. As much as is realistically possible, consider differentiation. Some schools have been sending home practical, multi-sensory learning packs which have been really welcomed by families of pupils with SEND.

Preparing the children

- Some children will need individual support in managing these changes. Social stories or scripts may help. Let them take a copy home (or consider delivering them as some schools have) so that they can look at it before the start of each day.
- Keep things as familiar as possible, if there are certain activities, seating, environments that benefit the child please try and incorporate them in the room you are using. Move their work stations and equipment to where they will be if necessary.
- For those pupils who are not attending school, social stories are also useful for parents and carers to use, to explain why the school is shut.

Think about groupings

- Use your discretion when grouping. Children with an EHCP are not a homogenous group. Being inclusive is key here and you are free to group children together for compatibility on the basis of needs and interests.
- Learning and play structures will be quite different in this context and groups will change based on this. Again, pupil passports or learning plans will be key in supporting the adults to understand what works and what could be problematic for pupils with an EHCP.

Supporting you

- This is a very worrying time for everyone and we would like to provide assurance that we will endeavour to minimise impact and continue to provide support to schools and parents in meeting children's special educational needs.
- 0-25, the Inclusion Support Service and the Behaviour Support team, in partnership with South Glos Education, Learning and Skills team, are all working and are available to support you over the coming weeks. If you would like to talk your arrangements through with someone please do call us.

Statutory Processes

The 0-25 service and Educational Psychology service is working to ensure the statutory processes for children with SEND continue in line with statutory requirements. We will continue to run the weekly statutory panel with requests and assessments already submitted, although we anticipate that the number of requests for new assessments will reduce significantly as a consequence of school closures.

The position on EHC Needs assessments is that those which are already in the pipeline, i.e. new requests already received; advice reports in the process of being completed; or advice reports completed will continue to be taken forward to statutory panel in line with statutory requirements. However, in the current situation, we do not anticipate receiving many new referrals, if any at all, before the start of the new academic year.

Additionally, consistent with Public Health guidance and in order to ensure that plans continue to be issued in a timely manner, we will consider alternative approaches to assessments as necessary. For example, for cases where existing EP Records of Involvement/reports could be used to inform psychological advice, we could possibly obtain further information through Skype/phone calls with members of school staff, parents/carers and potentially children/young people. This may mean that EHC Plans are issued with the proviso that a more complete EP assessment takes place before the first Plan annual review.

Resources for pupils with SEND

Integra have created a learning resource page for schools aimed at parents. It can be found [here](#).

South Glos Parents & Carers have created a bank of resources to be used for pupils with SEND. It can be found [here](#).

Contact Details

0-25 Duty Line (EHCP enquiries)	01454 865137
Inclusion/Leadership Support - Faye Bertham	07980 016685
Integra Business support - Julie Cole	01454863185
Educational Psychology	
North Locality EP Contact	01454 863363
South Locality EP Contact	01454 868591
Carys Marfleet	01454 866709
Simon Jones	01454 863163

Email contacts for inclusion and behaviour support. Contact your usual support person or if urgent ring Julie Cole who can ask them to ring you.

Jackie Muggleton	Jackie.muggleton@southglos.gov.uk
Claire Phillips	Claire.phillips@southglos.gov.uk
Sara Tanner	Sara.tanner@southglos.gov.uk
Linda Boyce	Linda.boyce@southglos.gov.uk
Louise O'Rourke	Louise.O'Rourke@southglos.gov.uk
Alison Little	Alison.little@southglos.gov.uk
Eleri Sears	Eleri.sears@southglos.gov.uk

Ten Tips to share with Parents and Carers from Young Minds

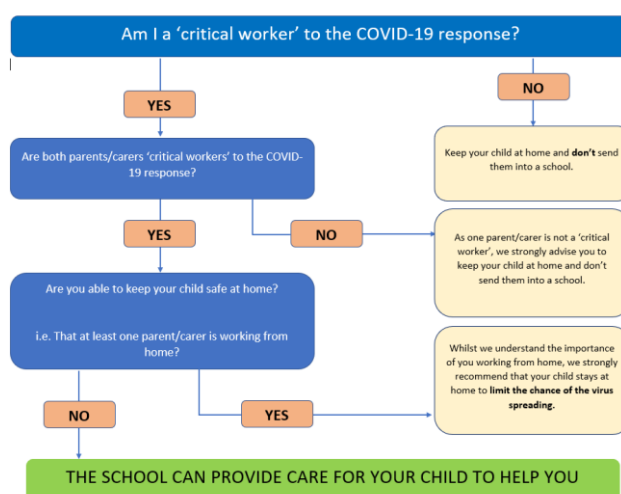
1. Try not to shield your child from the news, as it's likely they will find out somehow from school, being online or from friends.
2. Talk to your child about what is going on. you could start by asking them what they have heard.
3. Try to answer their questions and reassure them in an age appropriate manner. Remember, you do not need to know all the answers, but talking can help them feel calm.
4. Reassure your child that it is unlikely they will get seriously ill, and if they do you feel ill you will look after them. Your child might be concerned about who will look after you if you catch the virus. Let them know the kind of support you have as an adult so that they don't feel they need to worry about you.
5. Give some practical tips to your child about how they can look after themselves. For example, show them how to wash their hands properly, and remind them when they should be doing it.
6. Keep as many regular routines as possible, so that your child feels safe and that things are stable.
7. Spend time doing a positive activity with your child (e.g. reading, playing, painting, cooking) to help reassure them and reduce their anxiety. This is also a great way of providing a space for them to talk through their concerns, without having a 'big chat'. For activities ideas, visit our [starting a conversation with your child guide](#). (Young Minds)
8. Encourage your child to think about the things they can do to make them feel safer and less worried.
9. Be aware that your child may want more close contact with you at this time and feel anxious about separation. Try to provide this support whenever possible.
10. Remember to look after yourself too. If you yourself are feeling worried, or anxious about coronavirus, talk to someone you trust who can listen and support you.

<https://youngminds.org.uk/>

Key Workers

This flowchart is useful to use in discussion with parents when they are requesting a school place for their child. If they possibly can, they need to keep their child at home. Many parents working in these sectors will be able to ensure their child is kept at home. And every child who can be safely cared for at home should be, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.

This is not government guidance but is useful to assist you in discussion with parents.



New guidance on pupils with EHCPs

'Special schools, colleges and local authorities are advised to make case by case basis assessments of the health and safeguarding considerations of pupils and students on an education, health and care (EHC) plan. For some, they will be safer in an education provision. For others, they will be safer at home. We trust leaders and parents to make these decisions and will support them as required.'

Published 22nd March 2020 (Read the full publication [here](#))

'Those with an EHC plan should be risk-assessed by their school or college in consultation with the local authority (LA) and parents, to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a school or college place in order to meet their needs, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home. This could include, if necessary, carers therapists or clinicians visiting the home to provide any essential services. **Many children and young people with EHC plans can safely remain at home.'**

To help with self-regulation

Write these on a piece of paper and display them somewhere for all the family to see.

> **Create a space**, no matter how small in your home where you or your child can go to for some quiet time

Write - go to for a break from everyone. Choose a quiet space in your home.

> **Take 5** - breathe through feelings of overwhelm and frustration

Write - take 5 by breathing using the hand model. See the weblink for information.

<https://childhood101.com/take-5-breathing-exercise/>

Parenting Top Tip No 1 Kind AND Firm

It is the AND that brings kind AND firm together to avoid extremes.

Begin by validating feelings and/or showing understanding.

Offer a choice when possible. Examples:

- 1) I know you don't want to brush your teeth, AND we can do it together.
- 2) You want to keep playing, AND it is time for bed. Do you want one story or two?
- 3) I love you, AND the answer is, No.

Bedtime Stories

Every evening actor **Josh Gad**, who voiced Olaf in "Frozen," is reading **bedtime stories** on Twitter. #GadBookClub. 'For 10 minutes, he reads a children's book using his incredible skills as a voice actor — because we all know how much better a book is when every character has a unique voice!'

<https://t.co/ijZeFccTF3>— Josh Gad (@joshgad)

Resources for Parents South Glos

Virtual PE

Joe Wicks, The Body Coach, will be running virtual PE classes which children can do in their own homes. These will run at 9am from Monday to Friday. They can be accessed at PE with Joe on his Youtube Channel, TheBodyCoachTV.

Regulation Resources

Beacon House will be creating videos for all ages to help soothe, regulate, stimulate and connect at this challenging time

<https://beaconhouse.org.uk/>

How to increase Co regulation

A vital ingredient in calming the nervous system and increasing your sense of significance and belonging at times of social distancing.

> **connect with others** face to face i.e. via Zoom, Skype and Face time

> **Write a letter** or note to a friend, family member or neighbour, take a walk and post it to them, remembering to include your address so that they can reply.

In South Gloucestershire, we are keen to share innovative ideas for supporting pupils with special educational needs at home.

We will disseminate these ideas to all schools.

Please email your ideas to our School Improvement Team at:

Faye.bertham@southglos.gov.uk and Andrew.best@southglos.glos.gov.uk

and / or our inclusion team at

Jo.briscombe@southglos.gov.uk

Coronavirus Resources

Useful website to help you and your family talk about Coronavirus: Young minds have dedicated a whole page to supporting families with Coronavirus and tips on how to self-isolate. They have also added lots of useful websites.

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/talking-to-your-child-about-coronavirus/>

BPS/DECP advice for schools and parents/carers: (includes advice document on how to talk to children about the virus)

<https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/bps-offers-advice-schools-parents-and-carers-help-children-through-uncertainty>

Two picture information booklets for children to explain the virus to younger children:

https://660919d3-b85b-43c3-a3ad-3de6a9d37099.usrfiles.com/ugd/64c685_319c5acf38d34604b537ac9fae37fc80.pdf

For older, more able children:

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Story-about-Coronavirus.pdf>

Keeping Your Child Active

Bubble or Bean bag activities suggested by Kate an occupational therapist to keep your child active.

www.beactivekids.org