

Southend Borough Council's approach to Annual Reviews of Education Health and Care Plans -during the School Closure period March 2020

As a result of COVID19 all Schools and educational settings have closed to the vast majority of pupils and are operating with reduced staff in a constantly changing landscape. Many of the contributors to an Annual Review, including Health Care Professionals and Social Workers, are currently redeployed in order to prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable. Restrictions on social interactions apply to all and the shared priority amongst everyone is to maintain safety and wellbeing.

On 24th March 2020 Vicky Ford MP Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families wrote an open letter to the SEND Sector. In her letter she writes "On 19th March, the Government introduced new legislation into Parliament, in the form of the Coronavirus Bill ('the Bill'), in response to the outbreak. Our overwhelming aim for SEND, through the Bill and the proposed changes to regulations that are to follow, is to balance the needs of this vulnerable group to receive the support they need with managing the demands on local authorities and health bodies to respond to this outbreak. As a result, we have included in the Bill temporary emergency powers to enable us, where necessary, to modify the legal requirements on local authorities in fulfilling their duties in relation to EHC plans".

Whilst we await further guidance from the Department for Education (DFE) Southend Borough Council asks that all educational settings use their best endeavours to prepare for and hold Annual Review meetings where possible. This may include:

- Writing to the professionals involved to request their contribution to the review process;
- Requesting parental views;
- Requesting pupil views, through the parents if appropriate;
- Drafting the annual review paperwork, including any additional information received from external professionals;
- Circulate copies of the draft paperwork to parents and carers;
- Holding the Annual Review meeting via video conference or teleconference if parents/carers are in agreement and all attendees are able to participate in this way

Southend SEND Service acknowledges that for some pupils a multiagency review will not be possible during this period of school closure and that some reviews will need to be postponed until the school is fully open again and/or the relevant professionals are able to contribute to the review process. -

The LA will review continue to review the requirements of both the LA and educational settings in relation to Annual Reviews in line with government guidelines and any changes in Law. If you have any questions about the Annual Review process please contact the SEN Service at SENteam@Southend.gov.uk