

Reading Families' Forum

A voice for families of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities

COFFEE MORNING 22nd JUNE 2020 VIA ZOOM

Deb Hunter, Service Manager for Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND), and Maryam Makki, Family Information Service Manager joined 12 parent carers, Mencap, Alafia, Autism Berkshire and Parenting Special Children staff SENCo for the Forum's coffee morning.

Reading's Local Offer for information and advice about all things SEND

Maryam talked to parent carers about what the Local Offer is and what information and advice is available, including information for families of SEND children during the pandemic. They are continuing to work to support families during this time.

0118 9373777 (Option 2) (73777)

[Family Information Service](http://www.reading.gov.uk/fis) - www.reading.gov.uk/fis Facebook - www.facebook.com/readingfis

[SEND Local Offer](http://www.reading.gov.uk/sendlocaloffer) www.reading.gov.uk/sendlocaloffer - Facebook - www.facebook.com/readinglocaloffer

Forbury Gardens attack on Saturday 20th June

Deb acknowledged the impact that this could have on young people and families. Deb has set up support for anyone feeling anxious as a result of the incident. There are 3 levels of support:

- (i) Advice for parents and staff to support children and young people been sent to schools and is on the Local Offer.
- (ii) Should you need further support please contact your school SENCO who can tell you what support is available for children and young people from their school or college.
- (iii) If you, your child or someone you know has been affected and needs further support and / or advice, we have set up a Helpline: 0118 937 2080. This will be manned all day and until 8pm each evening."

Children and families' needs during the pandemic

The longer the pandemic goes on, the harder it can be for families with SEND children.

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Portage should be in regular contact with the families they are working by phone or video call offering activities and advice. This has not always been happening and families have felt on their own. **Deb will remind the Portage team.**

Autism Berkshire are offering telephone support to families. Helpline: 01189 594 594

If you and/or your child need support, contact your child's school and ask them to redo your child's risk assessment. The school should then send this through to the SEN team. If your child/young person's mental health is suffering, an educational psychologist may get in touch or refer the child to a mental health support team.

Educational Psychologists are setting up 2 groups for children/young people to reduce social isolation. Many of the parents at the coffee morning felt that their children would like a Minecraft group. Other sessions were photography, cooking.

Returning to/Starting school

Many parents would like a group for parents whose children are about to start primary in September – Deb will talk to the school SENCOs about this.

Deb suggested that yr 6s should meet 1 day at their primary school to say goodbye and to help with their transition to secondary. Again, Deb to talk to SENCOs about this. Deb also said they are in planning stage about the possibility of using Cranbury College to do social activities in the Summer hols.

Schools are also looking at transition programmes for children/young people over the summer holidays, possibly looking at socially distanced activities over this period.

Parenting Special Children have an online course on supporting SEND children back into education.

<https://www.parentingspecialchildren.co.uk/news/coronavirus/>

The Early Years Advisors are offering support to families during the pandemic Sam and Angela phone 0118 937 4981 or email at:

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Education, Health and Care Plans – statutory EHC needs assessments

Schools should work closely with families and offer support if a child needs it. If the child still does not make progress, the school and/or the family can apply to Brighter Futures for Children for an EHC needs assessment. School will need to evidence what they have done to support a child, including what they have spent, using the graduated response documents to help consider what support to put in before applying for an EHC needs assessment.

https://servicesguide.reading.gov.uk/kb5/reading/directory/advice.page?id=YU16_nsBEBQ

The exceptions to this work before applying for an EHC needs assessments is if a child moves into Reading with obvious needs or a child has a very severe disability.

An EHC needs assessment should be completed within 20 weeks. During the pandemic, reasonable endeavours should be made to stick to this. EHC needs assessment have been delayed during lockdown if an Educational Psychologist or Occupational Therapist needs to see the child to make an assessment. There were 3 EHC assessments delayed but Deb has asked them to be reviewed.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-law-on-education-health-and-care-needs-assessments-and-plans-due-to-coronavirus/education-health-and-care-needs-assessments-and-plans-guidance-on-temporary-legislative-changes-relating-to-coronavirus-covid-19#timescales-for-ehc-needs-assessments-and-plans>

If an EHCP is agreed, there is a co-production meeting with families before the EHCP is completed.

Every Friday, the SEN team have a bookable session to answer families' questions. This is taking place via Microsoft Teams during the pandemic. To book telephone 01189372674 or mail sen@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

RB 30/06/2020.

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