

# Reading Families' Forum

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

## **COFFEE MORNING 20<sup>th</sup> January 2022 VIA Zoom**

Nikki Stevens, SEND team manager, joined 5 parent carers at our coffee morning to answer parent carers' questions.

The SEND team assess, issue and review Education, Health and Care Plans. They also support schools to use the graduated response document for those children who are on SEND support and don't have an Education, Health and Care Plan. The graduated response documents can be found on the Local Offer:

<https://www.bitlylinks.com/1zZndEOuJ>

Reading's SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (IASS) is useful for advice

<https://www.readingiass.org>

Nikki answered parent carers' questions as follows:

1. Which Local Authority deals with a request for an Education, Health and Care Plan depends on where the child lives, not their school.
2. You can apply for an EHCP even if your child is currently home schooled.
3. If an EHCP is agreed for your child, you name the school that you think would best suit your child. The LA agree unless the school could not meet the child's needs or the placement would impact others or the efficient use of resources. Parents can appeal a decision on school placement if an agreement can't be reached.
4. SEND panels meet weekly and include Nikki Stevens, a senior case officer, a school SENCo, an Educational Psychologist and children's social care. The panel considers the views of the child and the parent carers. The panel helps the LA make the decision about whether to assess a child for an EHCP and whether to issue an EHCP.
5. If your child started school a year after they would have done – so are a year below, Brighter Futures for Children would support them staying in that year

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group throughout their education. However this decision is down to any new school. Special schools don't tend to have classes based on year group though.

6. If you think your child may need a special school place either now or in the future, tell your child's case officer as soon as possible so that planning can be put in place to find the right school at the right time for the child.
7. The annual review process can be very confusing and difficult to navigate. If all parties contributed to one form, this might stop reviews ignoring the parents' reports. Nikki advised that parents don't have to fill in the current form but her team are looking at changing the form for parent carers.
8. If a child moves from Reading to another Local Authority and has an EHCP, the school or family should let the Reading case officer know. The case officer will then liaise with the Local Authority that the family is moving to. If the child is going to move school as well, the family should ask for an early Annual Review.
9. Anyone working with a child can request an EHCP, it could be the child's nursery or school, a doctor or the parents. The child doesn't need a diagnosis.
10. An assessment for an EHCP evidence is looked at when, despite the early years provider or school having taken relevant and purposeful action to identify, assess and meet the special educational needs of the child or young person, the child or young person has not made expected progress. The early years provider or school should be following the graduated support document above.
11. If a child is making academic progress but the child is stressed and masking, the school should look at what support and adjustments they can make. If this isn't successful, a school or family could apply for an EHCP assessment. The meeting acknowledged that children could appear fine at school because they are masking and let out their distress at home.
12. There are local special schools for children who have a learning difficulty such as the Avenue and resource units in schools for those with social and communication difficulties and/or autism such as Christ the King. There is also the Thames Valley School for autistic children without a learning difficulty.
13. If families are worried that their child is becoming distressed or the child is missing school due to emotional based school avoidance, the family can seek advice from

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the school or IASS. They could also request that the school arranges an Educational Psychologist assessment. Keep talking to the school. Parenting Special Children is a good source of support and advice.

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

14. If families want support from a primary mental health worker or early help, email [cspoa@brighterfuturesforchildren.org](mailto:cspoa@brighterfuturesforchildren.org) or call 0118 937 3641 (Option 1).

Please email Nikki with any further questions

[Nikki.stevens@brighterfuturesforchildren.org](mailto:Nikki.stevens@brighterfuturesforchildren.org)

**Next coffee morning** Thursday, 3rd March 2022, 10.30 am – 11.30 am on Zoom

Nina Crispin, Information & Engagement Officer, and Katie Badger, Trainee Public Health Programme Officer, from Reading Borough Council, will be joining us to hear parent carer views to inform a new all age Autism Strategy for Reading.

To book email [fran.morgan.rff@gmail.com](mailto:fran.morgan.rff@gmail.com)

RB 05/02/2022

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