



LA Briefing for PCF – Friday 15th May 2020

As you are aware, the government published some temporary amends to the legislation around provision and timescales with regard to EHCP processes and delivery on the 1st May. The LCC website and Local Offer provides further information and supplements the briefing that I sent to you last week. A letter to all schools as well as parents and carers of children and young people with EHC plans is also being distributed providing lots of guidance as well as contact details of where to seek support if needed. I do also want to reassure you that schools are continuing to work with us during this challenging time and in preparation for the recovery period when children and young people will, once again, be able to attend school safely. Please refer to the following link for the most recent DfE guidance for parents and carers around children and young people potentially being able to return to school. Schools and the local authority are currently in discussions with the DfE regarding the logistics of these proposals and we will keep you informed on progress around this issue.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

I also want to reassure you that it is the LA's aim to work to the usual legislative timescales for SENA processes and it is only in exceptional circumstances that we will exercise the relaxed guidance. Where this is necessary we will be keeping parents, carers and young people informed and updated on progress as well as the rationale for any unavoidable delays.

Hot off the press!

As you are aware, between 3 February and 7 February 2020, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC), conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Leicestershire to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the disability and special educational needs reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014 and the report is now published on Ofsted's website.

Inspectors noted the determined effort made since 2016 to implement the disability and SEND reforms effectively, stating that leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas to develop in Leicestershire's SEND arrangements, and that significant action had already been taken to put in place a range of reforms, although some important initiatives are still to be introduced.

Partners in the Local Area (the local authority, the NHS, schools, colleges and the PCF amongst many others) are fully committed to supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and providing the best possible services are key priorities in Leicestershire. Drafting a plan of action and having this approved by the DfE is the first step that is being taken to boost and

improve support to young people in the county addressing the identified weaknesses is the Ofsted report.

Inspectors said changes needed to be made, including the way education and health care (EHC) plans are assessed, planned and monitored and that a clearly defined joint commissioning strategy needed to be drawn up, along with the implementation of a redeveloped neurodevelopmental pathway.

The report is welcomed by the PCF, noting that it highlights two important areas for improvement as well capturing other issues raised by parents and carers in Leicestershire. The PCF is committed to continuing their vital role so that the voice of parents and carers, children and young people is at the heart of these improvements and has confidence in the leadership of SEND services to make this happen.

You can access the full report on the DfE website and the Leicestershire Local Offer online:

<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50150954>

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs-and-disability/send-inspection-by-ofsted-and-care-quality-commission>

Emerging Minds is a research network that aims to reduce the prevalence of mental health problems experienced by children and young people. They work across sectors and disciplines to tackle research challenges that have been developed in partnership with young people, their families, practitioners and policy makers.

Their focus is:

- **Prevention**

Preventing the onset of a diagnosable mental health condition, detecting signs of mental ill health early and preventing the escalation of need (*from the World Health Organisation*).

- **Mental health promotion**

Increasing understanding and management of emotional and mental distress through programmes to change behaviours and attitudes (*from the World Health Organisation*).

- **Early treatment**

Effective, early treatment and help for mental ill health: Accessible when children and young people need it.

The Department for Education is encouraging parents and carers to respond to a study launched by Emerging Minds to help identify what protects children and young people during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period which has caused major disruptions to families' lives, through social distancing, school closures and lock-down. The **Co-**

SPACE project is tracking the mental health of school-aged children and young people aged 4-16 years throughout the COVID-19 crisis. An online survey is sent out and completed on a monthly basis by parents/carers and young people (if aged 11-16 years) This research is providing valuable information about how children's mental health can be supported and what is most effective in the current, changing context.

The study has full ethical and data protection approval and is fully GDPR compliant. The findings will help identify what protects children and young people from deteriorating mental health over time, and at particular stress points. Findings will be shared directly with health and education services to inform the development and provision of effective support for children and families.

To access the survey, please follow this link:

<https://emergingminds.org.uk/co-space-study-supporting-parents-adolescents-and-children-during-epidemics/>

Here's a reminder of a link to some useful resources for children and young people that has been issued by Public Health providing guidance on handwashing and respiratory hygiene:

<https://e-bug.eu/>

Finally, here's the direct link to our Local Offer website:

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs-and-disability>

It is all our hopes and wishes that the Coronavirus can be under control very soon so that children and young people can access services and provisions to meet their needs, however, unfortunately this may not be possible for the majority for some time and I continue to extend my appreciation for your patience and understanding during these most challenging of times.