

# Headteachers' Update

## The Daily 5 O'Clock Update For Schools

### Delivery of National Free School Meal Vouchers

We have been made aware that some schools may still not have received the emails from Edenred regarding the FSM Vouchers. Colleagues from across the NE region are reporting sporadic delivery which started at about 5pm yesterday and often ended up in a school's SPAM folder. Don't panic and check your spam!

### Northumberland County Council Staff Supporting Schools

We have a list of Education and Skills staff that we can deploy to help support schools during this challenging time. Many are SEN specialists, and all are willing to help you to keep your setting open and running. We have already received some requests and have been able to respond to them quickly. Please can we ask that if you would like an extra pair of hands, specialist or otherwise, you **contact Simon Baxter on 07870 365983**. This will allow us to get all the information we need to follow up quickly. The daily returns to NCC provide a space for you to complete if you would like support, and these are being passed on. In each case, a follow up conversation is required, so if at all possible, phoning in to Simon is preferable and quicker.

A number of schools have specifically requested Behaviour Support staff. We intend to support this when we can, and when it is necessary, as far as capacity allows. It may be that a Behaviour Support teacher is deployed to assess the situation and provide a behaviour plan, but once that is done, another member of staff will be able to help with the implementation of the plan. This will be worked out with the referrer on a case by case basis.

Staff will also be available over the Easter holidays.

### Support for Vulnerable Pupils

There is a significant amount of work being done by schools to support their most vulnerable pupils who are in school and those being cared for at home. We have been really heartened to hear about schools keeping in touch with those pupils not attending each day and their families. Many schools are talking on the phone two or three times a week to the children and their parents to support with schoolwork and to also give emotional support. Thank you for this work. If any schools have specific challenges in supporting their vulnerable children, please contact Cath McEvoy-Carr ([cath.mcevoy-carr@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:cath.mcevoy-carr@northumberland.gov.uk))

### Updated Guidance on Vulnerable Children and Young People and SEND

In case it got a bit lost in all the recent updates, we have pulled out a couple of bits from the guidance on vulnerable children and young people in relation to children with SEND. It now states that the Secretary of State would need to issue a temporary notice to relax delivery of plans/timescales: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/corona-virus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people#children-with-education-health-and-care-ehc-plans>.

See sections 20-29 in the above guidance for full text)

- The Coronavirus Act 2020 allows the Secretary of State, where appropriate, to temporarily lift the statutory duty on local authorities to maintain the precise provision in EHC plans; with local authorities needing instead to apply 'reasonable endeavours' to support these children and their families.

As such, where the Secretary of State has issued a temporary notice and a local authority is unable to secure the full range of provision stated in a plan, as long as they use their 'reasonable endeavours' to do this, they won't be penalised for failing to meet the existing duty in section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014.

- Any changes made to a child or young person's provision in their EHC plan would only remain in place temporarily. The full range of provision would be reinstated once the temporary notice expires.
- We are also proposing to amend regulations to provide for flexibility over matters such as the timescales in EHC needs assessments, and the reviews, re-assessments and amendments processes where particular cases are affected by the COVID-19 situation.
- The Department for Education will seek to ensure that local authorities receive clear guidance and support to help them manage these new requirements effectively.

### Updated DfE Guidance

A number of key guidance documents were updated yesterday, Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> March. Follow the link below and check the date on the document:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/latest?departments%5B%5D=department-for-education>.

For your ease, all the DfE Guidance can be accessed on the <http://northumberlandeducation.co.uk/coronavirus-2/>

### Latest advice from Public Health England around supporting children and young people's mental health

This advice is to help adults with caring responsibilities look after the mental health and wellbeing of children or young people, including those with additional needs and disabilities, during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-people-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-people-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

### Public Health Update for Schools - 1st April 2020

Public Health England – North East has requested that headteachers cascade the information below as widely as possible to students and parents through their various tried and tested communication routes. It is vitally important that we do not have YP concealing pregnancies or taking risky alternatives during this period of disruption.

- Although schools are closed for most Children and Young People, it is important to be aware that your Public Health School Nurses is still available to support children aged 11-19yrs.
- Any child can make direct contact through the Chat Health number where staff remain available to offer help and support around emotional or physical concerns a child or young person is experiencing.
- The contact number for confidential advice and support from ChatHealth is: 07507 332258.
- In addition, the Children's Commissioner has circulated a Children's Guide to Coronavirus that you may find useful for posting on your websites and forwarding on to parents and pupils:  
<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/cco-childrens-guide-to-coronavirus.pdf>.

### Offering Places to Pre-School Children

You may recall that we asked last week for any schools that would be prepared to accept pre-school children into their setting, if necessary. A number of schools responded positively to this request, but we do need more schools to agree. The children would, most likely, be rising-3 or rising-4 and have siblings in the school. The request has been made as some of our pre-school providers have had to close for staff health reasons and we may need to find places for the pre-school aged children of key workers. Please contact David Street if you feel that you can offer places [David.street@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:David.street@northumberland.gov.uk).