

Headteachers' Update

The Daily 5 O'Clock Update For Schools

Local Authority and School Monitoring of Vulnerable Pupils

You will be aware that, in recent weeks, concerns have been raised nationally about the monitoring of vulnerable children during the current coronavirus crisis and the relatively small number that have been attending schools.

The DfE have provided guidance for schools and settings on vulnerable children i.e. those who are open to social care or who have an EHCP which states:

'Those with an EHC plan should be risk-assessed by their school or college in consultation with the local authority (LA) and parents, to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a school or college place in order to meet their needs, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home.'

'There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend an education setting, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at severe risk. In circumstances where a parent does not want to bring their child to an education setting, and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker and education setting should explore the reasons for this, directly with the parent.'

Where schools are undertaking risk assessments of those with EHCPs and those open to social care (or on the edge of social care provision) in order to decide whether to offer a place at school, it is important to consider the holistic view of the child/young person and their circumstances, in order to decide where they are safest.

There is an NCC proforma which can be used to support schools with this process if required. The local authority does not require completion and return of the document but will be seeking reassurance that each vulnerable learner has been considered in this way.

Further to this, we have discussed with headteacher representatives during both last week's and today's meeting the need for the local authority to meet the DfE's expectation that we keep these learners in our sight and take responsibility for ensuring that risk assessments have taken place. For this to happen, we need a county-wide view which includes data that can be analysed comprehensively whilst understanding the demands on yourselves and your staff. We are also aware that you will all have your own internal assurance systems in place by which you are keeping track of these children and young people.

As a consequence, our data and performance teams across Education and Social Care have developed a form which consists of a pre-populated list of learners within each school setting who have an EHCP, and those who are open to Social Care at CP or CIN level. For each learner there is a series of 4/5 questions which are answered via drop downs. The hope is that it will take as little of your time as possible, based on the working knowledge that you have of your learners at this time.

We will be launching this next week. The aim is for you to have the form on Monday morning each week and to return it to us by 5pm on the following Thursday having recorded your monitoring of all vulnerable children during those four days. Based on your returns, we will use Friday of each week to chase-up any issues that you have raised about your vulnerable children.

This is different to the daily return that you provide to us. It will be a once-a-week record of your monitoring of all your vulnerable children. I apologise again for providing you with an additional task, but I would not ask you to do it unless I believed that it was necessary and worthwhile. Thank you in advance for your support with this.

Coronavirus (COVID19) Information Leaflet

You may have seen it before but the leaflet on what to do to help stop the spread of coronavirus, including symptoms and government support, is now available in an 'easy read' version that you may find useful for some parents and pupils.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-leaflet?utm_source=5904b32c-8734-4be9-bcaf-082ce751d87d&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=daily.

Updated Guidance about Childcare Provision Following the Outbreak of Coronavirus

The introductory sections and sections on Who this guidance is for, Prioritising children, Funding, Staying open for children of critical workers and vulnerable children, Early Years Foundation Stage and Holidays have all been updated.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures?utm_source=f6397212-c5c1-4258-960c-f972be31fa27&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=daily

School Governance Guidance

The School Governance Guidance has been updated to include information about video and/or teleconferencing.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-governance-update/school-governance-update-march-2020>

Northumberland County Council response to the National FSM voucher scheme

Given the issues many schools have experienced accessing the Edenred website since its launch on 1st April, council officers have been working to assist with finding solutions. I have also escalated these issues myself on a daily to the DfE. I have also been in direct contact with Morrisons and, tomorrow, we will be contacting the Coop on your behalf. Issues we know schools have been experiencing with the Edenred system include:

- The initial links not working
- Unable to contact Edenred
- Uploading of pupil data, systems not compatible and displaying error messages
- Website freezing and slow to navigate
- An issue arising today regarding Morrison's codes

In addition, during a phone call today to the DfE about vouchers, I was told about a nationwide issue with Morrisons vouchers which, apparently, will be resolved by the reissuing of the vouchers. I do not have any further details at this but, as soon as I do, they will go on the 5 O'Clock Update.

In order to address the frustration caused by the time being consumed by schools on this system, we assigned a dedicated project officer to progress the issues being raised by schools directly with Edenred. We are beginning to make progress with the resolution of a number of these issues after much persistence and information which we eventually received directly from Edenred was shared via the head teachers briefing on 14th April.

We recognise that some schools are still continuing to encounter problems but please be assured that we will continue to work closely with them to understand their issues and to communicate these to Edenred in order to ensure solutions are identified.

South Tyneside Educational Psychology Service Survey

I have had the following request from the South Tyneside EP Service. If you feel that you would like to participate, please follow the link in the message below. The covering letter has also been copied below.

We are hoping that you may be able to help us. South Tyneside Educational Psychology Service is conducting a piece of research seeking to explore and understand the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on school staff across the UK. The research aims to use the information gathered to help Educational Psychology Services plan the most helpful support for school staff in the immediate aftermath as well as adding to our understanding of what may be helpful in the future.

We were hoping that our colleagues within UK Educational Psychology Services might be able to support us in sending out the questionnaire link to their schools. The link to the online questionnaire is: <https://wh.snapsurveys.com/s.asp?k=15862559176> and we are accepting completed questionnaire responses until Friday 24th April 2020.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact South Tyneside EP Service directly.

Many thanks in advance.

Accompanying Letter:

Dear Colleague,

We are hoping that you may be able to help us. South Tyneside Educational Psychology Service is conducting a piece of research seeking to explore and understand the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on school staff across the UK. The research aims to use the information gathered to help Educational Psychology Services plan the most helpful support in the immediate aftermath as well as adding to our understanding of what may be helpful in the future.

You have been contacted as we feel that as a member of staff working within an education setting, you are best placed to offer valuable insights on this.

The project consists of an initial online questionnaire, with two short follow-up questionnaires to capture data as we move through the current crisis. In order for us to send you the follow up questionnaires you will be asked to leave an email address when completing your first set of responses. Your email address will not be passed on to any third parties and will be deleted at the end of the study.

Questionnaires are anonymous and are in no way a test of your knowledge. All responses will be stored on a password protected computer and will only be viewed by the research team. Please submit your completed questionnaire by Friday 24th April.

Please follow this link to complete the first questionnaire:
<https://wh.snapsurveys.com/s.asp?k=158625591766>.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Many thanks in advance,

*South Tyneside Educational Psychology Service
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