

An end of term update to families from ISEND

Dear families,

As this strangest of school terms approaches a close, ISEND would like to reach out to families with children and young people in the SEND community to recognise what an extraordinary job you and your children have been doing during the Covid-19 'lockdown'. We are aware of what a challenging time this has been for many of you, but also of the positives that may have emerged through this experience. We are working hard to ensure that these are not lost- so that in September when schools are fully back, your child can continue with ways of learning that have been beneficial for them and continue to build good relationships and understanding of their needs.

On-going concerns and support:

ISEND recognise the wide range of experiences that your child(ren) and families have had during the lockdown period and that families may still have concerns that will be individualised to their circumstances. ISEND understand the additional worries of families about returning to school, particularly if their child has health needs or was already having difficulties with progress or wellbeing at their school prior to Covid-19. Throughout lockdown, the Local Authority has actively promoted the importance of schools and settings talking with families and giving opportunities to raise concerns so they can be discussed and addressed. Many children with SEND have already returned to school, so if your child has not been back to school yet we recommend talking with other families and friends who have returned to hear from them about their experiences.

Educational Psychology Service telephone helpline:

To support home learning and wellbeing the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) set up a telephone helpline in May for families with children with SEND, that enables 30-minute calls with an Educational Psychologist. The need for this was identified in feedback from the East Sussex Parent Carer Forum, who helped coproduce the information about the service. Calls might be asking for support for children/young people with autism and/or anxiety as well as preparations for the transition back to school. A survey indicates that the helpline is building parent and carer confidence in their ability to create positive change for their children. For more information and details please see the flyer: <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/media/15479/new-parent-and-carer-eps-helpline-flyer.pdf>

The Local Offer Webpage:

The Local Offer page has been updated on [activities and support during coronavirus](#). Here, you can find key contact numbers, local helplines and resources as well as parenting support information on the Open for Parents website. ISEND will update the information throughout the summer, including childcare and community activity information and guidance to help families prepare for their child's return to school in September: <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/media/15479/new-parent-and-carer-eps-helpline-flyer.pdf>

Social Media and communications:

The ISEND Facebook page has been adapted through lockdown to provide virtual support to families through [@ISENDEastSussex](#), [@CLASSPlusEastSussex](#) and [@igoEastSussex](#) by regularly posting resources, activities and advice for supporting education, but also wider issues such as anxiety and challenging behaviour. On the Communication, Learning and Autism Support Service (CLASS+) page, you can find Top Tips, and you can benefit from advice in a direct way through video content made by experienced practitioners. The English as an Additional Language Service (EALS) has created

bilingual story time videos which are all shared on their Facebook pages, and the videos can be viewed here: [East Sussex ISEND CLASS+ Information, Advice and Top Tips for Anxiety](#)

Finding things difficult:

Together with East Sussex Parent Carer Forum, ISEND created a Coronavirus Support flyer with key contacts for families of children and young people with SEND who are finding things difficult. We would encourage anyone who is struggling during the Summer Holidays to look at the local offer on the East Sussex County Council website and to consider telephoning the Single Point of Access. All details are on this flyer:

<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/media/15382/isend-and-espcf-coronavirus-support-flyer-final.pdf>

You can also contact the Amaze SENDIASS helpline for additional information, advice and support :

<https://amazesussex.org.uk/parent-carers/services-and-support/sendias-helpline/>

Summer holiday activities / play schemes:

Families with personal budgets will be able to access their usual holiday provision although there might be some changes due to COVID. The special schools have a variable offer, again due to COVID and families are advised to check with their child's school to see what's available. We are currently looking for providers to extend our summer provision to families with disabled children.

IGO:

The i-go team have been working with our providers to check which are open, and to ensure that our leisure card users feel confident using their services. Most of our providers will require families to pre-book activities so that they can ensure they are keeping their customers safe. Please follow the link below to find the latest offers and promotions: <https://igo.eastsussex.gov.uk/>

What about September?

There are so many conflicting messages in the media about the safety of school attendance. The Local Authority will be sharing clear evidence-based messages through a communication project over the summer holiday; with the facts from health professionals and information about how schools will continue to keep all children and adults safe in school. We hope that this will be reassuring to your family and will alleviate some of the worries about returning to school in September. Most concerns relating to individual special educational needs and/or disability should have been addressed through the risk assessment process, however, we recommend speaking with your child's teacher and/or the school SENCO before the end of term, if you haven't done so already.

Schools and settings have been working hard on recovery plans for September for several weeks, adapting to updates in government guidance and communicating directly with you about your child's return. The full ISEND offer is in place ready to support schools to include their children with additional and special educational needs and disabilities and has been shared with schools and settings so that you receive support at the right time. The Local Authority has provided general advice and guidance on how to meet the wellbeing needs of all children on their return to school in September, particularly as some of you have not attended school since March 2020 and ISEND has provided supplementary guidance specific to children with SEND. Understanding of the additional challenges for those children who will be transitioning between year groups and phases of education following the lockdown period has been at the forefront of planning in schools and settings. Government guidance is clear around how to use the curriculum and environment to support children and young people with this transition. If you have spoken to your child's school or college, but have continued concerns about the provision for your child in September please contact: Family Information Service 0345 60 80 192 cs.customerrelations@eastsussex.gov.uk.

Most importantly, school staff and people who visit to support your children and young people in school, for example ISEND practitioners and therapists have really missed them! Everyone is ready and eager to welcome children back to the school environment so that they can continue to learn, enjoy and achieve. Have a safe summer and see your children in September!

With very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nathan Caine', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

Nathan Caine,
Head of Service
Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability, East Sussex County Council