

Education for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) during the national lockdown

This note is about education for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) during the national lockdown (January 2021).

It has been produced working with:

- Sheffield Parent Carer Forum
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice, and Support Service (SENDIAS).

Guidance is changing regularly and schools are looking to respond to it as rapidly as possible.

Who should attend school or college?

The Government has stated that schools, colleges, alternative provision, and wraparound childcare should only allow vulnerable pupils and the children of critical workers to attend during the national lockdown. Parents and carers who are critical workers can send their child to school if required but should keep their children at home if they can. Clinically extremely vulnerable pupils are advised not to attend. All other pupils should learn remotely.

Vulnerable children and young people include those who:

- Have a social worker
- Have an education, health, and care plan (EHCP)
- Are considered vulnerable by the school, college, or local authority for any other reason. This could include children who have difficulty taking part in remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study).
- The definition of vulnerable also includes others at the education setting and local authority's discretion, including pupils who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health.
- Please see the full list here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

Vulnerable children are strongly encouraged to attend school or college. But some parents may feel their child is better suited to remote learning at home.

SENCOs are regularly contacting families so please talk to your child's SENCO or class teacher about this. You can ask for your child to attend school or college even if you initially turned down a place. Again, please talk to your child's class teacher or SENCO about this.

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Some parents have also asked whether their child with SEND could attend on a part-time basis. Please talk to your school or college about this as each setting has their own arrangements.

Will I be fined if my child does not attend school or college during the national lockdown?

No. Non-attendance will not be penalised. This also applies to attendance at remote lessons that are taught live. Schools are continuing to monitor attendance in order to be able to support those pupils who struggle to access education for any reason.

The decision for a child with an EHC plan to stay away from their education setting is a matter of choice for parents and young people. If a parent wishes for their child to be absent or a young person chooses not to attend, they should inform the education setting of this so it can be properly recorded.

Do special schools have enough capacity for all pupils with EHC Plans?

The guidance is clear that special schools should enable pupils to attend where the family wishes for them to do so.

There may be circumstances where it is not possible for special schools to provide their usual full-time interventions and provision for everyone who wants to attend – for example, if staffing levels are too low. In these cases, schools may have to offer less than fulltime education to learners. They are expected to offer some face-to-face learning to all that want it.

Special schools are working through their arrangements and will discuss them with parents. They have been working on different possible models whilst waiting for government guidance and so situations may change. They will continue to review these arrangements.

Please contact your child's special school or college if you have any questions.

What kind of provision can my child expect in school?

This will vary by sector. Schools will provide a range of different remote education. This may include live on-line lessons, pre-recorded on-line lessons and work packs depending on needs. Schools may need to adjust for learners with SEND to ensure that they can access this provision.

Please contact the school to discuss your child's needs and how these can be met in school.

How will provision in an EHC Plan be provided?

The law has not changed on EHC Plans and children and young people should still receive their provision, although this may need to be delivered a bit differently. EHC Needs Assessments and EHC Plan annual reviews should continue as planned.

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Your child's school or college will be able to work with you to plan how your child will be supported – either at school/college or learning remotely at home.

Specialist services including Educational Psychology and the Autism Education Team are available to work with schools and colleges to talk about children's needs, concerns and to offer advice. As in the first lockdown this may also include support to families at home. This includes children on SEN support as well as those with an EHC Plan.

All advisory services, such as therapists and advisory teachers, will continue to deliver support remotely in many cases. But they will deliver support face-to-face and in-school support if needed.

If you have any questions please contact your child's school, college or therapist. They will do their best to help you and your child.

What should I expect from remote learning? What if my child cannot or will not take part?

Home learning may feel a bit different now compared to back in March/April. Schools are developing many different approaches. These include live taught lessons, pre-recorded lessons, and work packs.

The Government has said that schools and colleges should provide the same amount of remote education as the teaching pupils receive in school. As a minimum, this should be:

- Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2) - 3 hours a day on average, with less for younger children
- Key Stage 2 (Year 3 to 6) - 4 hours a day
- Key Stages 3 and 4 (Year 7 to 11) - 5 hours a day

Your child should be given learning that is suitable for them. Some children will be given different resources to their classmates. Teachers are best placed to know how the needs of children with SEND can be most effectively met to help them make progress. Planning will need to reflect your child's needs.

Please talk to your child's SENCO or class teacher if there are any issues with this, or if your child is struggling to engage with home learning. We understand it can be particularly challenging for children with SEND and schools and colleges should do their best to help and support you. If you feel your child is not getting enough support, please raise this with your SENCO. If that doesn't resolve the issue, you may want to contact SENDIAS (or SENDSARS if your child has an EHC plan).

Where children with SEND are not accessing school, settings should, on top of the remote education in place, make robust and regular contact with families to ensure that needs are being met. This should be at least once a week for a child with an EHCP and once a fortnight for a child at SEN Support.

What if I don't have access to the right IT or internet data?

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Please contact your child's school or college if you need support with access to IT or internet data. There are local and national schemes that may be able to help.

Some broadband providers and mobile phone companies have special tariffs and increased data allowances. Please contact your provider to see if you are eligible.

As well as the usual devices (PCs, laptops and tablets) it is also possible to access Google Classrooms on a PS4 or Xbox One, as well as the newer PS5 and Xbox Series X/S models. You will need a basic keyboard and mouse to be able to do this. Please speak to your child's school or college if you do not have access to these.

Staying safe and well

Please continue to follow Covid-19 measures to stay safe and well:

- Keep social distancing
- Wash your hands
- Wear a mask
- Children and adults must not come into school if they are symptomatic and they must get tested. In the event of a positive case, contact tracing and isolation will apply.

Visit www.learnsheffield.co.uk/Covid-19 for information about supporting your family's health and wellbeing. This includes resources and services if you want someone to talk to.

Further information

1. Sheffield's Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIAS) provides impartial information, advice and support to children and young people with additional needs aged 0-25 and their parents/carers.

You can get in touch by:

- Telephone: 0114 2736009
 - Email: ssendias@sheffield.gov.uk
 - Website: www.sheffieldsendias.org.uk
 - Facebook: www.facebook.com/sheffieldsendias
 - Instagram: [@sheffield_ias](https://www.instagram.com/sheffield_ias)
2. Visit the Local Offer for information about support and services in Sheffield for children and young people with SEND. This includes a Covid page: www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk/localoffer
 3. Contact SENDSARS with any questions or concerns about the EHC Plan processes including assessments and reviews:
 - SENDAssess&Review@sheffield.gov.uk
 - 0114 273 6394