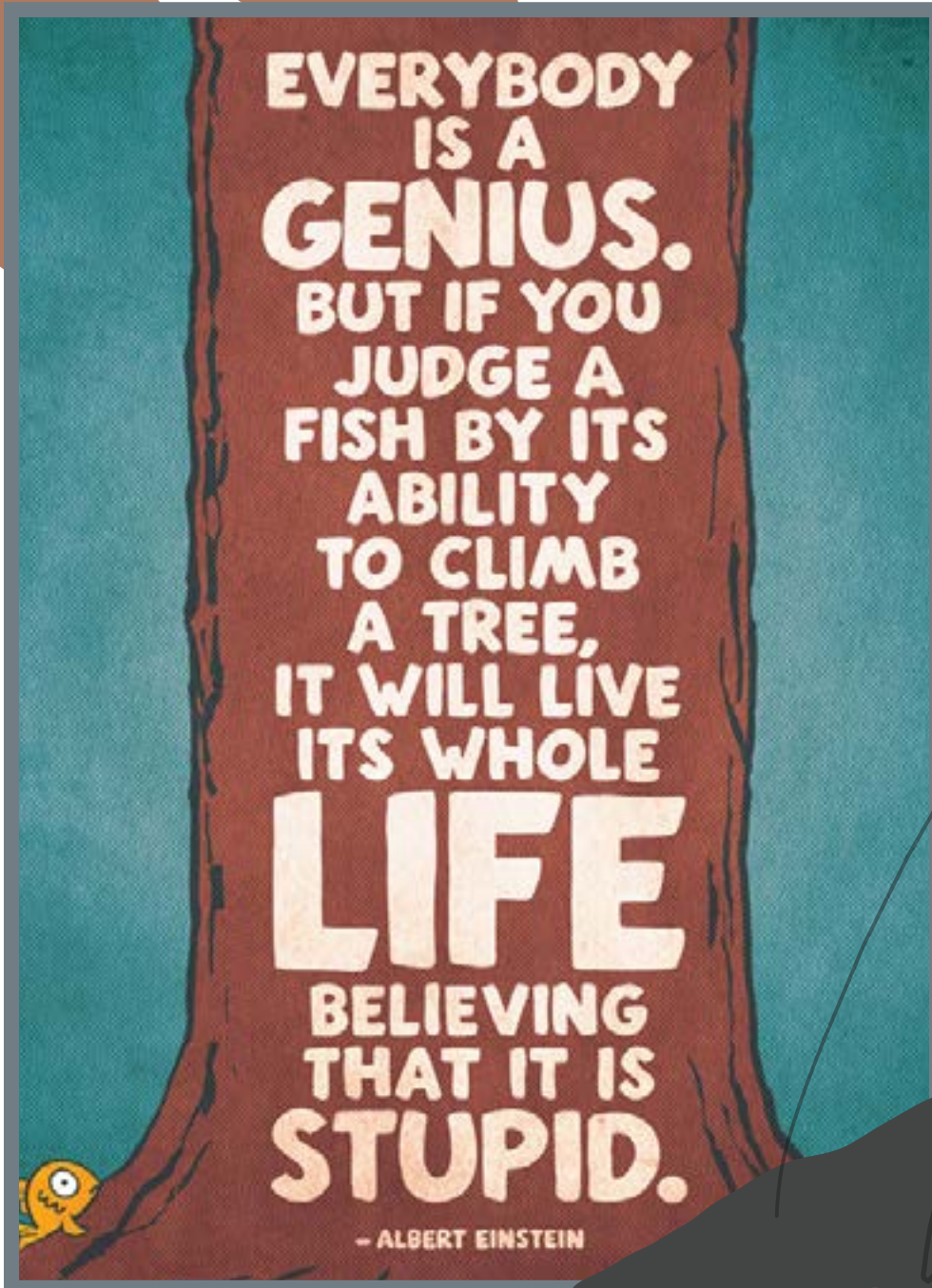


INCLUSION AND SEND PARENT NEWSLETTER

August 2020

With updates from:

- The Inclusion Service Manager
- The SEN Team
- Educational Psychology
- Children's Social Care
- Inclusion Ambassador/ SEND Advocate



Is there anything you would like to see in a future issue?
Email: Andrew.smith@bury.gov.uk



UPDATE FROM THE SERVICE MANAGER FOR INCLUSION

— Cath Atherden

COVID 19 RESPONSE FROM THE INCLUSION SERVICE

During the last few weeks of the summer term, the Inclusion teams were busy planning for a gradual return to school based outreach work from September onwards in line with the Department for Education guidance. Understandably, this is unlikely to happen with immediate effect because at the end of the summer term, many schools had not finalised the detail of how they would be operating in the autumn term. We expect that school plans to accept outreach support will be finalised across the first half term and will be spending the first few weeks of the new term contacting schools to find out the circumstances under which our teams can be welcomed back into schools.

As our teams are still required to work remotely, we are also planning to offer a continued but more focused remote service to schools during the autumn term which is likely to include virtual Continuing Professional Development for school staff and where appropriate, opportunities for virtual consultations to offer advice and support where face to face support is not possible. This service will be able to accommodate the needs of pupils with new vulnerabilities as well as those already known to our teams.

The schools' helpline has continued to be available over the summer break, as has the Educational Psychology Service helpline for parents and schools, and both will continue into the autumn term as an increasing number of pupils return to education.

Whilst the term time only Inclusion teams are away recharging their batteries in readiness, planning will continue over the summer holidays to ensure we can offer the best service possible in the new academic year.

Cath Atherden

Cath Atherden
Service manager, Inclusion

SEN TEAM UPDATE

As you will know from the news all children and young people are expected to return to schools, colleges, nurseries and other education settings in September. The [Education Secretary made a speech](#) on 3 July explaining the Government's plans for how this will work and what schools are expected to do.

Schools and colleges in England began reopening to a greater number of children early in June. This included children with education, health and care (EHC) plans who had not been attending school during the coronavirus outbreak, as well as children who do not have an EHC plan.

From September, children in all year groups are expected to return to school. Schools will be expected to keep contacts between individuals to a minimum, to maintain social distancing wherever possible, and to keep different groups in separate 'bubbles'. There may be different start and finish times for the school day. It is expected that there will be regular handwashing and cleaning of school areas.

Do check with your nursery, school or college as to what arrangements they are putting in place in September to keep all children safe and how you can work with them to ease your child back after the long break in routine. Make sure they are aware of any changes in

the needs of your child/young person you have seen during their absence from school, nursery or college.

If anyone in a nursery, school or college develops symptoms of coronavirus, they can be tested. From September, schools and colleges will be given a number of home testing kits for any children and staff who can't get to a testing centre.

What is the situation for special schools and colleges?

The Government has said that keeping children at a distance and maintaining 'bubbles' may be more difficult for special settings, and has published separate guidance for schools and colleges, which you can find by following the link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>

Special schools and colleges will be contacting parents and involving them in planning for their child's return in September. They should also contact and involve young people over the age of 16.

Every school and college is expected to have a plan for the possibility of a future local lockdown and how they will make sure that children's education continues. You could ask your child's school or college for details about this.

Are all children expected to return to school full-time?

The Government says that it is now safe for children to return to school full-time, because the number of cases of coronavirus is falling and the NHS Test and Trace system is in place.

All children and young people, including those with EHC plans, will return to education settings full-time from the beginning of the autumn term.

Schools and colleges should carry out risk assessments to identify what additional support children and young people with EHC plans need to be able to return to their full education.

Do children who have an EHC plan have the right to receive the services and support their plan says they need?

During the coronavirus outbreak, the Government introduced temporary legal changes that meant schools and councils had to use 'reasonable endeavours' to provide what is in a child's/young person's EHC plan. These temporary legal changes have not been extended beyond the end of July, and children and young people will again have the right to receive the provision in their EHC plan. However, the Government have said that they may need to introduce changes in particular areas if there are further local outbreaks of coronavirus. We will update you in this newsletter to reflect any changes as they happen.

Do parents have a choice about their child returning to school?

From September, attendance at school will

be compulsory, unless it has been agreed that a child should be out of school. If you have concerns about this, you should discuss these with your child's school or college and ask them what measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk of the virus spreading.

What should I do if I feel worried about my child's return to an educational setting?

Talk to the nursery, school or college about your concerns and tell them about anything that has changed for your child/young person. The education setting will want to work with you to ensure that children and young people can be safely brought back as soon as possible.

What will the SEN team be doing to assist in the safe return of children and young people with EHC plans?

In the first place we will be monitoring children and young people's return to their educational setting. We will be talking to and meeting with SENCO's to identify any issues that they need support with to return children and young people. We will also be talking with parents and young people where there are issues in relation to changes in need and transitions back into educational placements. If you have any questions for us or any concerns about transition we are open over the summer and you can send an email to us by using this address: senteam@bury.gov.uk

Enjoy the rest of your summer with your children.

Educational Psychology Helpline

For several months now, during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Educational Psychology Service in Bury has been offering access to a phone helpline service for parents of vulnerable children and young people, particularly those with special educational needs and disability. The helpline operates on Monday afternoon 1.00 p.m. until 3.30 p.m. and on a Wednesday morning 9.30 a.m. to 12.00 p.m., the number to ring is 0161 253 6406. It will continue to operate in a modified form over the summer holidays in that an Educational Psychologist may not be available to speak to you when you ring in, but if you leave a phone number you will be called back as soon as someone is available.

Covid-19 and the resulting closure of schools has been something of a shock for all of us, it has changed our lives in ways we would not have predicted and created a sense of uncertainty about what the future holds. This has been particularly distressing for children and young people, and even more so for those children and young people who are already quite vulnerable because they have a special educational need or disability.

From the calls we have had so far, where children and young people have experienced difficulties their responses have tended to be characterised by one of two extremes. Either they have become considerably withdrawn from the environment around them, isolating themselves from other people, or they have displayed a high degree of emotional volatility, which seems to be frequently and easily provoked into responses characterised by intense distress or anger.

It is difficult to give generalised advice in relation to circumstances where children and young people experience such difficulties as each person is unique and so are the specific elements that combine to impact on their emotional state. However, some things to perhaps consider when trying to help a child or young person

who is struggling with the current situation are:

- Don't assume that any difficulties they are experiencing are automatically related to a fear about them personally becoming ill with Covid-19. Fears could just as easily relate to other people contracting the illness, such as parents or grandparents, and this may in turn become concerns about who will care for them if such people become ill. Their fears may also not be directed to the illness itself but to other related factors such as they may be missing being at school, particularly missing their friends and they may also be worried about how their relationships with their friends might be affected by not seeing them on a regular basis. They may be worried about missing out on learning and how that might impact on future academic achievement. They may just be generally anxious about the uncertainty that the current situation has created. The point is here that it is important to communicate with your child or young person in order to establish what specifically they are worried about so that anything you do to try and support them is actually addressing their specific concerns.
- If their main concern is over contracting Covid-19 and fears of becoming ill or possibly dying of the illness it is important to try and address this by being both positive but also realistic and honest. Emphasise that the likelihood of any one individual contracting the illness is actually extremely small and that even for those who do become ill the majority only experience



very mild symptoms. Explain that only a very small proportion of those who catch the illness will be so ill they will need hospitalisation and even in these cases the majority of hospitalised cases will recover. Also emphasise that scientists are working on developing a vaccine in the future and that if successful this should be able to protect people from becoming infected. It is important not to exaggerate here but just provide a bit of perspective to help de-escalate feelings of anxiety as in these circumstances people tend to assume the 'worst' will happen even when the 'worst' is actually highly unlikely to happen in reality.

- It is also important to be aware of your own emotions when trying to help children and young people with their own emotional responses. It is important to be both calm and emotionally controlled in this context. If people they trust and rely on give the appearance of being anxious this will only serve to prompt the very same emotional response in children and young people

themselves. In order to be able to contain your own feelings in these situations it is necessary to recognise and acknowledge them yourself. This has been a very stressful time for parents who are often trying to balance childcare demands with work demands. In these circumstances it is important to actively take steps to reduce such stress as much as possible. Where possible it is necessary to specifically arrange for time in your busy schedule for yourself even if it is only a short break. Making use of support networks of friends and family is also important to be able to talk through your feelings and frustrations with sympathetic people who will listen to you.

If you do not have access to support networks to help you out then why not ring the helpline instead? We will do our best to provide you with what support we can over the phone. Alternatively if you just want some advice or just someone to listen, then you might also find the helpline useful.



COVID 19 grant
 For those that have had their short breaks provision disrupted due to Covid 19 the grant remains available for those that have not yet requested one, for equipment or toys to assist with stimulating and occupying children whilst restrictions on social activities remain over the summer holiday. The grant is accessible through the family Social Worker or Family Support Worker. The grant is up to £200 for a single child with additional needs or £300 per family if there is more than one child with additional needs. Families should know their Social Worker but may not know their Family Support Worker. If they are unsure they can ring the Children With Disabilities Team.

SUPPORT OVER SUMMER



Direct Payment – COVID19 adjustments
 Following discussions with Bury2gether, a temporary adjustment to the Direct Payments policy has been made. Where short breaks support has been disrupted the funds can be used as follows:

- Up to £40 per week for entry fees for activities or purchase of resources for the remaining 3 weeks of the summer break. Social Workers or Family Support Workers will need to be informed to audit the change of use. This is in addition to the Max cards that some parents have and which are available through Bury2gether.
- Groups of parents who have direct payments can combine their direct payments to arrange and purchase an



CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

- exclusive session at community activities.
- Action For Children and Together Trust hours can be converted to direct payments whilst sessions are not being provided.

Action For Children

Action for Children continue to provide online contact and activity sessions along with practical support for families.

Crossroads Together

Crossroads Together have been resuming their support to families in line with staff availability.

There continues to be a more flexible approach to extended family members being

the child's PA during COVID19 restrictions.

The new Commissioning of Short Breaks

A big thank you to everyone who took part in the focus groups and the webinars. The constructive feedback and affirmation of direction has been really helpful to forming the specifications. A special thank you to Andy Smith who helped with the young people's focus groups. Bury2gether and others will continue to work with Social Care to shape the new commission. A summary of the work so far can be found on the Bury Directory.

OUR TOP 5 SLEEP TIPS

One of the biggest issues that young people have mentioned since lockdown is finding it much more difficult to sleep well. There are some fantastic free resources available with tips and advice for getting a good night's sleep, including the following booklet from Cerebra UK: <https://cerebra.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/sleep-guide-june19-low-res.pdf> and several leaflets from The Children's Sleep Charity: <https://www.thechildrenssleepcharity.org.uk/leaflets.php>

However, sleep hygiene is not an exact science and not all strategies work for all young people, so me and a group of young people came together to write a list of top 5 things that have helped them with getting to and staying asleep.

- Andy Smith, Inclusion Ambassador/
SEND Advocate



01

Having a quiet and distraction free environment is beneficial for a lot of people. However, if a child is anxious this can give them more of an opportunity to overthink things and feel stressed/ worried, which can make it more difficult to sleep.

Having some background sounds or music to listen can be a great distraction, which can make it easier to sleep well.

Young people have recommended:

1. Using the Spotify 'sleep timer' feature so the music automatically turns off after 10-15 minutes
2. Listening to a YouTube video, so the music stops after the video ends (LoFi music is a popular choice!)

02

Most newer phone/ tablets have a 'sleep mode' or 'blue light filter'. This reduces the amount of blue light that comes out of your screen. Blue light reduces the production of melatonin, making it more difficult to sleep. The best option is to not use devices for an hour before bedtime, but if you feel you have to use them, blue light filters can be useful.

03

A lot of SEND young people struggle with self regulation, meaning that they can sometimes be too over stimulated to sleep well at bedtime.

Going on a walk or doing some other form of exercise before bedtime every day can help to burn off excess energy and get into the best possible state for sleep.

04

A lot of SEND young people can experience the world in a unique way due to sensory differences and this can make sleep more difficult. But there are strategies that can help with sensory differences (credit, the National Autistic Society website):

- Block out light using dark curtains or black-out blinds.
- Reduce noise using thick carpet, shutting doors fully, turning off appliances, and moving your child's bed away from a wall with activity going on on the other side.
- Block out noises by letting the person use ear plugs or listen to music through headphones.
- Remove labels from bedding and night clothes, or try bedding and nightclothes made from other materials.
- Reduce smells coming into the room by closing the door fully, or by using scented oils that the person finds relaxing.
- Remove distractions, such as toys on the bed and pictures on the wall (unless the person finds these relaxing), and consider a different colour on the walls.

05

You shouldn't eat in the last 3 hours before bedtime, but if you do, there are certain foods that can help with sleep according to [The Sleep Council](#)

1. Bananas
2. Almonds
3. Fish
4. Warm milk
5. Honey



SUMMER ACTIVITIES

Children's Services is aware that there are additional risks and vulnerabilities facing our families over the summer holidays and therefore this year we have taken on a greater coordination role in respect of activities available to ensure information is provided and directed to our more vulnerable families as well as supporting access. Our Early Help Teams have also partnered with "Fit and Fed" and our staff are helping to deliver this over the summer holidays.

We are working with the third sector and partners to ensure all activities are uploaded on to the Council Bury Directory, within our 'Safe 4 Summer' link, which is accessible to professionals, parents and carers. This website is being updated daily with any new activities and our practitioners are scanning activities to look at how they might direct and support families they are working with to appropriate links. <https://theburydirectory.co.uk/services/safe4summer-online-activities>



Examples of the activities available for all families (including specific links for SEND, teenagers, 0-5s etc) on the Safe 4 Summer link are as follows:

- 'Posting Positivity' - Youth Service links up with Bury Grammar to write letters to people currently shielded or isolated.
- Bury Youth Theatre - Game and improvisations via Zoom.
- 'We Be Kids' - Programmes for parents to support physical and mental wellbeing of their children through nature, storytelling etc.
- 'Down the Line' - Responds to young people who are playing/congregating around rail tracks with virtual access to education materials.
- Green Community Café - Running daily activities for young people including virtual friendship groups.
- Anxiety in children and young people free educational courses.

In order to reach as many families as possible, we are also advertising various activities for the families we work with through our Youth Service, Facebook and Twitter pages and our Locality Facebook sites.

Targeted Youth Support

- Targeted youth sessions for some of our more vulnerable young people
- mentoring support
- Virtual Youth Timetable
- Social Media sites which provide additional information and direction to young people on the offer
- We have now delivered 1200 activity kits via GM to our most vulnerable children
- In light of current lockdown our youth service is now doing additional detached work with young people alongside police

and early break 2x weekdays, Fridays and over the weekend to support messaging to young people who are but in groups.

Fit and Fed

- We are directing families we are working with to the fit and fed activities

For families that have a Social Worker or Early Help worker, we will be monitoring their engagement in the activities available to encourage and ensure our more vulnerable children are receiving the daily stimulation and activity they need to mitigate the risks we know are present for them in terms of their education and development.

Inclusion Ambassador Summer Update

Quite a few people have got in touch to ask what activities are available for SEND young people over the Summer holidays.

So I have made a list of activities on a 'Google Document', so everyone who has access can add comments and suggestions such as activities I have not included and other amendments.

If there are any activities which are not currently available in the local area which you think would be useful, please feel free to share those too, as I have strong links with local groups and Third Sector organisations, so we could work together to create something new.

I will then check back and update the document daily to make sure it has the most up to date information:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Na9z6M_1MhrzI_jc90A02PWyKODihktyW-DLUQqfLA/edit?usp=sharing

We hope you enjoyed our August newsletter!



Do you have any questions to ask us?

Email them to andrew.smith@bury.gov.uk and we can answer them in next month's newsletter!