

Inclusion and SEND Parent Newsletter

July 2020

Welcome to the first edition of our new Inclusion and SEND Parent Newsletter. We have faced interesting and challenging times over the last few months and a great deal has been taking place to help support you and your family through them.

Things are beginning to return to a new normal and over the summer, work will continue to prepare for this. This newsletter outlines some of the support available over the summer; the next issue will include information on the support and systems being put in place to help the return to school in September and other services.

I hope you find the information helpful and we really do welcome your feedback on both content and style, along with future features you would like see.

Enjoy the read,

Karen

Karen Dolton
Executive Director Childrens Services

Update from Service Manager for Inclusion

Covid 19 response from Inclusion Service

At the start of the lockdown period, the teams within Inclusion Service redirected their work to supporting the most vulnerable pupils, in particular, those with significant needs and those without school places at the time of lockdown. Inclusion teams have worked with schools to ensure access to home working materials for learners and to offer continuing specialist advice remotely to help schools continue to meet the needs of vulnerable learners.

As schools have developed their recovery planning ahead of learners returning to school, teams have been busy preparing advice and information for schools for all types of SEN, particularly to support transition to new classes or new schools in September. Our Sensory Needs Teams have prepared remote training materials for class teachers and teaching assistants new to hearing or visual impairment. Our SEMH Team have been supporting schools with transition planning for vulnerable pupils transferring from Y6 to Y7. Our Educational Psychology Service has continued to support the EHC Assessment process and has also opened a helpline for parents (see following page). Our Additional Needs Team has been working with schools to identify and anticipate the needs of their newly vulnerable learners i.e. those children and young people who have been adversely affected by their Covid 19 experience. Inclusion teams have together prepared materials for schools to help teachers and teaching assistants to address these needs.

We are continuing to plan recovery support for schools into the autumn term and will bring you the latest information in the August newsletter.

Cath Atherden

Cath Atherden
Service Manager - Inclusion



Information for Parent/Carers – 6th May 2020

Launch of Educational Psychology Service School/Parent Help Line

Bury local authority know that the current situation with COVID-19 is a very worrying time for parents and carers, and even more so for parents and carers who have children or young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disability.

We have listened to what parents and schools have told us about what would be helpful during these uncertain times, and as a result we have established a school/parent helpline.

The helpline will be run by Bury Education Psychology Service and is available to provide advice to parents/carers and schools starting **Monday 11th May 2020**. It will run twice a week on **Mondays between 13.00 and 15.30** and **Wednesday between 9.30 and 12.00**. The helpline contact number is 0161 253 6406.

The helpline is intended to provide EP advice and support for schools/parents of CYP with SEND in the context of the current situation that exists due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

Types of EP advice and support available could include:

- Anxiety, stress and related issues arising from being out of school/returning to school/COVID 19/missing friends etc.
- Loss and bereavement – EPs provide Critical Incident support, but the helpline may identify where this support is needed.
- Transitions – particularly for those children starting reception/year 7.
- Advice on routines/behaviours because of changes to routine.
- Reassurance/advice on academic progress and expectations once children are back to school.
- Advice on EHC needs, assessments and annual reviews.

You may, of course, have other educational questions or concerns that are not included on this list, so please do not hesitate to call, no matter how small your question or concern is.

Please note that EPs may signpost to other services as part of the support but will not become involved beyond the advice and support of the phone call.

I hope that you find this information useful for you and your family.

Karen Whitehead
Strategic Lead - Inclusion & Partnerships
Bury Council



SEN TEAM UPDATE

The outbreak of Coronavirus across the country has been a challenging time for us all. Here at the SEN Team, we have been adapting to working from home and finding new ways of managing the statutory processes that we oversee, as well as endeavouring to support our young people and their families during these unusual times. Our normal routines and support systems have been affected and for children and young people with SEND this can be particularly difficult.

We know that this is a worrying time for all parents and carers so, along with our colleagues from the Additional Needs Team, the Inclusion Leads, The Primary SEMH Team, the School Attendance Team and the Early Help Team, we have set out to contact as many parents of children with EHCPs as we can, so we know how young people are coping and to offer advice and support, as required. We will continue to do this up until the end of July, so if you would like to arrange a call as you have a particular concern about your child, please email senteam@bury.gov.uk. We will also be staffed throughout the summer holiday, although this will be at reduced capacity, so if you need any advice from our team, please email and we will get back to you as soon as possible.



Celebrating Success into a Pathway of Employment.

Against a backdrop of a transition from adolescence to adulthood, your parental pride swells as your child finishes school or college and looks to the future. This can be a roller coaster of excitement and worry as you try to support them to navigate the complexities of their personal life and the world of work. This can make the difference between a young person making a successful transition from school into employment or getting stuck in a gap of unemployment with significantly reduced prospects - uncertain as to where to go for help and then what do you do?

I am the bridge in the gap!

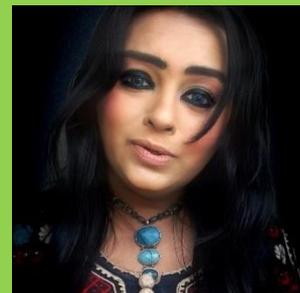
I am Zerqa Ahmad and have almost 20 years' experience of working for Bury Council to support young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) into supported employment or work opportunities. I have worked in my current role as Business Development Officer for over a year

My main role is to support young people with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) post 16 into a smooth transition from school/college into a pathway of employment. I do this by working in partnership with employers, schools, colleges, providers and parents so that young people with SEND are offered suitable work placements, supported internships, traineeships and employment opportunities.

This is done by profiling, job matching, advising and guiding work search, employer engagement, negotiating reasonable adjustments based on individual SEND needs, providing in work support, interview support, building confidence and self-esteem, action planning and help to overcome barriers into employment

I have had a huge success in 2019 from being a finalist for Employee of the Year at work to winning Best Asian Actress Oracle Awards in the UK. But most importantly, since April 2019 to March 2020, there have been 13 job outcomes, 15 in social care provision, 25 are on a work placement/ supported internship and are close to employment, 1 has gone to university. These Young People are those who would not normally be able to engage in work experience and have little chance of gaining paid employment. Through the partnership, the attitudes of employers, parents and the Young Person towards their suitability for work experience and paid employment has been changed.

Like they say "Teamwork is Dreamwork"



Bury's Inclusion Partnerships



In response to the area SEND inspection, and research into adulthood outcomes for vulnerable children and young people, schools across the borough formed Inclusion Partnerships. Four primary and two secondary Inclusion Partnerships have been established; these Partnerships are organised geographically. The formation of the Partnerships has facilitated increased independence from the local authority, allowing schools to support each other in finding inclusive solutions. As a result, schools are able to respond to the needs of the children and young people in their localities earlier and more effectively.

Each of the six Inclusion Partnerships has a senior leader as chair. Full Partnership meetings take place every term and are supported by personnel from the local authority, health and social care. Schools play an active role in decision-making to support pupil placements and to shape local provision. The Partnerships are allocated funds to develop locally-based support for inclusion.

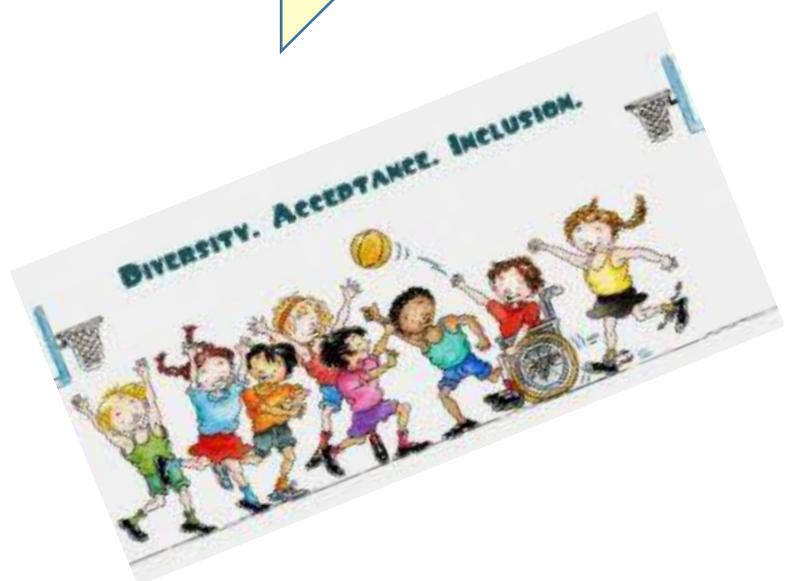
Each Partnership holds monthly pupil panel meetings. At these panels, schools can request Partnership or Service support; the panel meetings enable schools to access swift and effective support. In addition to these meetings, the local authority facilitates half-termly Partnership SENCO consultation meetings. These meetings provide SENCOs from the same partnerships with the opportunity to network. SENCOs are able to discuss their schools' inclusion needs, access local authority specialist advice and share best practice.

Primary Inclusion Leads, Suzanne Pendleton and Gareth Rennie, and Secondary Inclusion Partnership Manager, Nick Bell, continue to provide support to the Partnerships' schools during this period of coronavirus restrictions. Inclusion Partnership meetings continue to take place using secure virtual meeting platforms. Through the Partnerships, work is continuing with schools to support the development of provision, Y6-Y7 transition, KS3-KS4 transition and individual pupil casework.



Inclusion Teams FAQ offer

Inclusion service would like to offer an FAQ section of the newsletter for parents. If parents would like to email their questions to andrew.smith@bury.gov.uk, we will post responses in the next issue of the newsletter in a month's time. Please can FAQ emails be marked with 'Newsletter FAQ' in the subject line? Many thanks.



Inclusion Ambassador/ SEND Advocate Update

Hello, I hope you are doing as well as you can be during this difficult time.

The work I do is heavily influenced by the voices of SEND young people, so I thought it would be useful to share an update of what young people have said and what I have been doing as a result. If anyone would like more information or think there is anything I should be doing better or differently, please feel welcome to email me at Andrew.Smith@bury.gov.uk.

Over the lockdown period, many young people and their families have been in touch and expressed feelings of isolation and loneliness, so my response was to set up virtual Zoom meetings where young people could have a chat, play games and have a bit of distraction from everything that has happened.



This has gone very well, with over 60 young people attending sessions and it has been great to see so many new friendships being developed. These meetings are still running and any SEND young person is welcome to join us.

Each Zoom meeting is different. In some meetings we play games for the whole session, in others we listen to music and chat. We even ran a trial drama group in partnership with The Met, which we are hoping will start again in August!

As restrictions ease, I will be continuing to run Zoom meetings but I also think it will be important to share information about other groups and activities for young people in addition to helping other organisations to offer support to SEND young people in the best way they can. So expect details for activities, groups and events from me in future editions of the newsletter.



Social Care Update

Face-to-face assessment suspension continues for health and disability benefits

- Face-to-face assessments to remain suspended, but kept under review
- Some review and reassessment activity to gradually resume from July 2020 for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- People are encouraged not to delay making claims as all benefits remain open and telephone and paper based assessments are in place where appropriate

This temporary suspension, initially brought in for three months to protect people from unnecessary risk of coronavirus at the outset of the pandemic, will remain in place following a consideration of the latest public health guidance. We will announce any changes to this in due course.

All services remain open and people are encouraged to make a claim if they believe they need support, or to update the department on a change of their circumstances.

As measures are taken across the country to ease restrictions, the department will also gradually resume some review and reassessment activity which had been put on hold because of the coronavirus outbreak. We will shortly be restarting review and renewal activity in PIP and DLA, starting with those claims which were already underway when this activity was suspended.

What this means for claimants:

- Anyone who makes a new claim or is due an assessment will be contacted, if necessary, to discuss next steps, which could involve either telephone or paper-based assessments.
- We will shortly be writing out to some PIP and DLA claimants asking them to complete paperwork to resume their reviews, reassessments and renewals. For PIP cases where paperwork has already been returned, claimants may be contacted by one of our Assessment Providers.

Short Breaks Update

The commissioned services are still not yet returned to normal.

Action for Children continues to provide virtual support and contact with children and young people, along with practical support, for those who usually attend their club. We are in discussions with them about what may be available over the summer holiday, including a limited number face to face (with appropriate social distancing safe measures) alongside the continuation of their virtual support and practical help.

Crossroads Together for All have resumed services to families known to them, although this is still at a reduced capacity due to impact of COVID19 on staff availability. We are exploring with them an additional service of face to face support, away from the home over the summer but again, this will be for limited numbers so will have to be targeted. If we are able to progress this, it will be targeted towards all children/young people with a short breaks package that has been disrupted and prioritising on basis of needs.

Together Trust have declined to have their contract extended so it ends this month. Together Trust should have been in touch with all families affected, who will be receiving a letter from ourselves about options for support from other providers or Direct Payments (DP). Please contact us on 0161 253 6076 if you have not received the letter and your Social Worker or Family Support Worker has not yet been in touch.

We are working in partnership with Elms Bank, together with children and young people who attend the school and currently have a short breaks package that is disrupted - enabling some redirection of their short breaks funding to fund places at the summer scheme at the school for the first two weeks. We cannot guarantee that every child will be able to attend as staff availability may limit the number of places and so they will be prioritised on assessment of needs.

We have learned through these challenges, new ways of working on virtual platforms; for some children and young people this has been a more positive experience than our current provision. We are using this learning in our new commissioning of the services.

COVID19 Grant

At the beginning of the Lockdown in March, we recognised there was an increase in challenges to families as children were not able to access school and much of the short breaks provision was disrupted and PAs employed through direct payments were either not available or not appropriate to continue, as families worked out ways to keep their child safe from infection. In response, Bury established a mechanism that quickly processed requests for change of provider or mechanism for support, increased hours to school holiday levels and in addition made available to those with a short break package or in the process of assessment, a one off grant of up to £200 - or £300 if there was more than one child with a disability. There was some flexibility for other families alerted to us via school or other professionals that identified increased pressures and risks. To date, 116 grants have been given. Although there has been a slow return to school, we recognise the Summer Holiday is about to start and short breaks provision is unlikely to be available at full pre-COVID levels. The grant will continue to be available to anyone who has not yet made an application. To apply, contact your Social Worker or Family Support Worker who will discuss your child's needs. We will continue to support changes and flexibilities of provision, but please again, discuss with your worker as we need to authorise and record any changes.

New Commissioning of Short Breaks

We are required to refresh our commission of services every 3-5 years. This ensures we continue to have services that effectively meet needs and provide value for money. Many things have changed since the last commission of the services and we have the benefit of experience of what has worked well and what has not. The process started last September and we were making good progress, having designed a survey with input from parent representation and issued and analysed the results. We established a Parental steering group to help us design and plan further engagement with the parent community and children and young people themselves. This met in December and we agreed a format and process for a number of Focus Groups. These were held in January and February. Progress was then placed on hold whilst we focused on COVID19 response. We reconvened the steering group virtually last month and went through the findings. These have been summarised in a briefing report and a more detailed audio presentation - both are available on the Bury Directory. Webinars are taking place on Tuesday 21st July - one in the morning at 11:30 and one in the evening at 7pm; we very much value and appreciate your input to shape the type of service we commission, and we do hope you will be able to join us.

We have also been holding focus groups with children and young people to ensure their voice informs the services we are commissioning; these have been very successful and we will continue to use these types of platforms to increase engagement in both the development and evaluation of services.

The time table is very tight - details are in the presentation on the Bury Directory - but we need to have the specifications out to potential providers next month. The new services would commence April 2021, ensuring a safe transfer if needed on any change of provider social care

Bury
COUNCIL

