

## **A message from Pinpoint Cambridgeshire & Family Voice Peterborough**

Today Cambridgeshire County Council & Peterborough City Council have issued information and guidance (attached) to parents/carers and professionals about the changes they need to now make to Statutory SEND processes. This is for several reasons:

- The current situation with coronavirus is making it difficult to work as normal and to assess children face-to-face in school or at home.
- Staff sickness means services may struggle with enough people to do this work.
- If there are staff shortages, the Local Authority will need to prioritise help for the most vulnerable over all other work – keeping people safe comes first.

As this is a national issue and doesn't only affect Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, the Government has issued temporary legislation to allow for local flexibility. This will not affect your child's legal rights in the long-term or mean that they won't get what is written in their Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP). It just means it is not illegal to pause some things or take a bit longer whilst children are not in school and services are having to prioritise keeping people safe.

You may feel that there are too many other things going on and are not ready to make decisions at the moment- that's ok too. Your child won't lose out - talk to the Local Authority so they know this is what you need.

Everyone remains committed to doing all they reasonably can do under these unprecedented circumstances.

### **What it will mean for your child:**

#### **If you are in the process of requesting an Education Health Care Assessment:**

You can still make a request and the Local Authority will do what it can – do expect that until a full assessment is possible (and we've returned to some normality) this may take longer as it will be difficult to get information and to make assessments in person.

#### **Right of appeal about the decision:**

You will not lose this right and the Local Authority will try and keep to the normal timescales where possible.

#### **If your child has a draft EHCP**

The Local Authority intends to keep this work moving but timescales may be longer than usual.

#### **Deciding on a school place:**

This is difficult whilst schools are not open as usual and parent carers/ children cannot make visits. The Local Authority will continue to consult but timescales may take longer. It may not be possible to arrange visits, but please talk to the Local Authority to see what might be possible.

#### **If your child has an EHCP**

It's likely that already your child may not be getting some or all of the support written in the EHCP. You should expect this to go back to how it was once schools reopen, staff return from sickness and life gradually returns to normal.

**What if my child is due for Annual Review?**

Settings (school/nursery/college) will do what they can when requesting information from all those who would be involved. However, as some staff will be off sick and face-to-face meetings are not possible, this could be difficult. Other professionals from Health & Social Care may have been diverted to other duties. Where possible a phone conference or video conference might be an option. Should you be in this position please discuss it with your setting (school/nursery/college) to see what is best for you and your child.

**Family Voice, Pinpoint and both local authorities wish you well at this difficult time.**

**Please stay safe.**