Annual Reviews during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Buckinghamshire Guidelines

Introduction
During the COVID-19 pandemic, the guidance from UK government regarding school closures and social distancing means that the annual review process will not be able to be conducted in the same way. The main principle underpinning all of the annual reviews undertaken is to ensure that most accurate, reliable and comprehensive information is gathered and collated, given the constraints in place. We have produced this local guidance, pending the publication of national guidance, meaning it is under frequent review.

Annual review meetings
We recommend that, where possible, virtual platforms are used to hold annual review meetings. We recognise this is an extremely difficult time for all, and that holding such meetings maybe unusual, but we want to enable the opportunity.

EHC Coordinators have taken on new caseloads from the 6 April, and have made contact with SEN leads for schools that are now on their new caseloads. Should you have any specific questions around how annual reviews could work, please do liaise with them. We are regularly maintaining our online information via schoolsweb, schools bulletin and the Local Offer so do continue to check those.

We will be available to support with the arranging of virtual meetings where it is requested by families or settings, so do request this if needed. We wish to assure you that all iSEND staff members maintain full access to emails and electronic files during this time and will be happy to answer any queries that you may have.

We request that following the Annual Review meeting, settings send any paperwork to their allocated EHCo and / or our business support mailbox for their area:-

- SEN Aylesbury Hub senaylesbury@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
- SEN Wycombe Hub senwycombe@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
- SEN Chiltern South Bucks Hub sencsb@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Local Authority decision – following Annual Review
While staff remain healthy and able to work, we are committed to processing Annual Reviews. The following are the potential outcomes, following Local Authority consideration:

- Continue to maintain the EHC plan in its current form
- Agree to amend the EHC plan
- Cease to maintain the EHC plan
Local Authority - Issuing Letters / Proposed Amended Plans

EHC Coordinators will draft and issue any Proposed Amended Plans / intentions to cease to maintain the EHC Plan. Educational institutions will be consulted with through agreed points of contact and given calendar 15 days to respond. We are aware that communication within educational establishments may be challenging at this time, and are looking at ways to improve communication during this time, including a specific list of consultations to be sent to special schools and discussed in weekly meetings with your designated EHCCo.

Every effort will be made to ensure that full and clear information is given to settings and understood by the correct point of contact. Should this not be possible, EHCCos will ensure Proposed Amended Plans are sent to the agreed contact for each setting and parents / young people electronically. Parents / young people will then have 15 days to respond if further amendments are required. We do recognise that this may be a difficult time for you all so do let us know if you are unable to respond in detail and would like additional time within which to do this. Once agreed, a Final Amended EHC Plan can be issued. If no amendments are required to the EHC Plan, a letter will be issued electronically to say that the plan will remain in its current format.

Please note all guidance produced by the iSEND service in relation to statutory timescales and assessments are subject to change as further advice is provided by the DFE.