

SEND Family Newsletter

A newsletter for Croydon parents and carers who support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

National update: Return to school for SEND Pupils

At publication, the current Government plan is that all children will return to school full time in September; this includes children and young people with SEND.

Since the summer half term break, the proportion of children and young people returning to school has increased week on week.

Understandably, many of you are still anxious about a return to school. Where appropriate, it is important that children have a chance to spend some time in school before the summer break. This will help them remember the structure and routine of school. It also helps them experience social situations.

Feedback from families and pupils who have returned has been very positive. Pupils are happy to be back and meet face to face with their friends and staff they know. They have been able to adapt to safety measures. Working in smaller groups as part of social bubbles has also suited many pupils with SEND.

Mainstream and special schools have a range of plans in place to reassure you of the safety arrangements, and to offer flexible placements. This gives pupils the chance to spend time in school before the summer break. This will ease the way back to a full return in September.

Be sure you contact your school directly to discuss this and make plans to support a return before the summer break or September. Share any worries that you have so you and the school can talk them through.

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Croydon SEN Enquiries

senenquiries@croydon.gov.uk

SEND Local Offer

Services, advice, information and what's on in and around Croydon
localoffer.croydon.gov.uk

Educational Psychology Advice (EPS) advice line

For parents or carers to speak to psychologists about any concerns for themselves or their families.

Email

edpsychology@octavopartnership.org

Feedback and subscriptions

To give us feedback on the newsletter, suggest future topics, or register interest in subscribing to this newsletter by email:

localoffer@croydon.gov.uk

Transition topics: Starting and moving to a new school

Beginning a full-time reception place or moving to secondary school can be difficult for all families and children. Often this is even more so for children with special educational needs.

Here are some top tips to support a successful move (transition) to a new school.

What should parents/carers do?

- **Talk positively** /share pictures about joining the school and the things to look forward to throughout the summer months leading up to the start date. **Use a calendar** for a visual countdown to the start date.
- **Give your child an opportunity to ask questions** about any worries or anxieties they may have.
- **Make sure you know who your key school contact will be** in school. In mainstream schools, this is likely to be the SEN Coordinator (SENCo).
- **Be proactive** and share information with the new school, talking about your child's strengths as well as their special needs. You might create a one page 'all about me' profile to do with your child. Examples are included on the Local Offer.
- **Look at the school website** and the SEND Information Report; this will give you lots of information about SEND provision at the school. If you cannot see this, ask the school to send you a paper copy.

What should Early Years settings and schools be doing to support you and your child?

- They should make sure key information is shared to support a successful move. This may be a video meeting (like Zoom), with other key professionals joining as needed. Plan extra activities and events to help you and your child get to know the new school, such as:
 - a virtual tour
 - stories read by the new class teacher

Transition topics: Moving to adulthood

Parents in Partnership (PIP) is planning a series of workshops in the autumn to support a move to independent living, employment and training and transition to adult services. The planned workshops cover a range of themes including All about money, Puberty, Sexuality and Relationships and person-centred planning.

The aim of these workshops is to reduce the stress and anxiety that families may experience at this time by making sure that families are:

- well informed about the options available after school
- able to work with other agencies to support timely planning and preparation for a move to adulthood
- aware of the key legislative changes and financial support (benefits)

The workshops are aimed parents who have a child or young person aged from year 8 (12-13 years old) up to 25.

Full details are available on the Local Offer site or by emailing: Tansy.muller@pipcroydon.com Tansy would welcome your feedback to check that the programme addresses the issues that are most important to you and take suggestions for any additional themes.

- transition/photo booklets and social stories to explain routines, introduce key staff and address any emerging concerns
- Create and share a SEND/transition plan with you. This should have details of targets and the interventions and adjustments that will be in place to support progress.
- Make sure that staff receive any additional training that may be required to meet your child's needs.
- Contact you within the first few weeks of the new term to see how things are going.

Additional resources

The National Autistic society have produced a set of resources with advice and strategies to support transition at different times. Although aimed at autistic children and young people, the information is helpful for others with additional needs. Go to:

www.autism.org.uk/about/transition.aspx

Ment4: Mentoring Support

Ment4 provides one to one mentoring for teenagers and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties at school or Pupil Referral Units. This includes those with learning difficulties, self-harming, bullying, and those who are vulnerable to exploitation or bad choices.

Ment4 helps schools and families by providing support to the young people outside school hours. Typically, Ment4 spends 4 months with each young person, seeing them once or twice a week. The young person's concerns and dreams are listened to while building and establishing trust.

Ment4 provides a wide range of activities online including song writing, baking, games, drawing and fitness challenges - all tailored just for young people.

The referral process is simple and often starts with a phone call or email, where Ment4 can agree the aims and scope of the mentoring. There is a charge for the mentoring but Ment4 works closely with the Local Authority for support with this, or helps you look for alternative funding if none is available elsewhere.

Contact us

- Email: info@ment4.org
- Tel: 07752817882
- Web: www.ment4.org

Coping with bereavement

The death of close family members and friends can be deeply distressing during normal circumstances but without access to wider face-to-face support networks, this sense of loss and pain can be exacerbated.

The **Local Offer** has links to services that will be able to offer you support with this. Go to: tinyurl.com/croydon-grief-support

The **Croydon Educational Psychology Service** parent advice line may also be able to offer you support and signpost to services for you and your family members. Find out more: tinyurl.com/eps-advice

Health Services Information

Assessments

We continue to provide an emergency service to those presenting in crisis to Croydon University Hospital. Assessments are initially being offered to patients by telephone. If this cannot be done by phone for any reason, a face-to-face assessment will be offered with the appropriate use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

We are now **re-open to referrals**. For any children or young people still requiring a CAMHS service, please make a re-referral to us via the Croydon Emotional Health and Well-Being Single Point of Contact (SPOC): www.croydon.gov.uk/ewmh

Be aware that some assessments such as those for children suspected of a developmental disorder (including Autism Spectrum conditions and Attention Deficit with Hyperactivity Disorders) need face-to-face contact. It is unlikely they will be seen before we are open to routine face-to-face appointments. This will affect waiting times.

We have been enormously grateful for all your support and understanding during these challenging times, we will keep you updated with further service developments in due course.

Croydon Health Services NHS Trust – School's Health Team

The school health team are available throughout the year - not just during term time. We are more than happy for parents to contact us for advice or support about any physical or emotional health issue that may be affecting your child. Behaviour, healthy living, weight management, continence, bedwetting, and allergies are just some of the issues that parents contact the team about. Call about any concerns you may have, and if we cannot help we do our best to direct you to someone who can. See "Health services contact details" above.

Immunisation Team

The Immunisation Team are currently offering immunisation catch up sessions in schools and community locations across the borough to deliver the immunisations to young people that have been missed during lockdown.

Health Services contact details

With reduced resources during the pandemic, we recommend contacting by email.

Special Schools Nursing Team

Schools and parents can contact their normal named school nurse in the Nursing Hub on 020 8680 4810
Email mhn-tr.specialschools@nhs.net

Speech and Language Therapy

Email CH-TR.SLTcroydonchildren@nhs.net
Tel. 0208 714 2594 between 8:30am and 5pm.

Physiotherapy

Email ch-tr.croydonchildrensphysio@nhs.net
Tel. 020 8274 6853

Community Paediatrics

Email ch-tr.communitypaediatrics@nhs.net
Tel. 02084013982 option 1.

Occupational Therapy

Email ch-tr.croydonchildrensOT@nhs.net
Tel. 0208 274 6854/6850.

School Health Team

Email CH-TR.Northschoolnurses@nhs.net
Tel. 020 8274 6391

ChatHealth: Confidential text line for young people aged 11-19. Text 07520 615205

Immunisation Team

Email: CH-TR.ImmunisationTeam@nhs.net
Tel. 020 8274 6453

These immunisations are usually offered in Years 8 and 9 at school and include the teenage booster of diphtheria, tetanus and polio and meningitis ACWY, the HPV vaccination, and also the MMR if 2 previous vaccinations have not already been received. Please contact the team if you feel your child needs any of these immunisations.

The immunisations catch up for school-aged vaccinations has resumed at schools and community clinics across the borough. The immunisation team can be contacted for any queries or for appointments. See "Health services contact details" above.

Leisure and support over the holidays

What activities can children and young people access over the summer holidays?

Here are some ideas for leisure activities that are available over the summer – some are specifically for children with SEND. Do not forget to check out the Local Offer too at localoffer.croydon.gov.uk.

- **Heart n Soul:** a creative art company which provides opportunities for people with learning disabilities to explore and discover their creative talents:
 - www.heartnsoul.co.uk
 - www.heartnsoulsoundlab.com/learn
- **Mousetrap Theatre Projects:**
 - www.mousetrap.org.uk/about-us-2
 - **Online Summer School – Heroes of Our Time! - Monday 3rd to Friday 7th August**
www.mousetrap.org.uk/online-summer-school
- **POLKA theatre;** a theatre in the UK dedicated exclusively to children. Below are the links to their online events and activities. Please note there is a charge for some events.
 - polkatheatre.com/whats-on-2
 - polkatheatre.com/polka-online
- **Soundabout:** Interactive music-making sessions are on their Facebook page every Tuesday and Saturday at 2pm. www.soundabout.org.uk/tv
- **Virtual Museums**
londonist.com/london/museums-and-galleries/virtual-tour-museums-of-the-world
- **Activities from Youth Engagement Team:** Visit youngcroydon.org.uk to find out about online events and activities the service are running during the holidays. There are lots of other great resources here too.

Calleydown Short Breaks Provision

Calleydown is open but capacity is significantly reduced with respite care for a small number of children and young people.

Increase in capacity will be led by advice from the government and Public Health. In the meantime, parents and carers who are currently accessing this provision have been contacted to find out if they continue to need support during the holidays, so that a provisional plan can be created.

Any families who are struggling to cope in the interim period should contact their social worker/family support worker and we will look at alternative support options.

KIDS SENDIAS Update

Although we are not able to meet face to face, our helpline remains open on 07469155943.

We are also happy to receive your emails: croydon@kids.org.uk and SMS texts.

If you leave a phone or email message with us we will get back to you as quickly as we can. Where we would usually provide meeting support, if possible, we will support through telephone or video conferencing.

We will continue to add any new information we receive to our website and Facebook. We will try to include links to items that we hope will be helpful if you are supporting your children at home or helping them to get back to school.

During summer time, we will continue to run our online SEND Drop In's on Friday mornings 10-12.00 noon. E-mail: croydon@kids.org.uk to register or ask for more information.

We know it is a difficult time for everyone and we would encourage everyone to keep in touch and stay as connected as possible.

The Department for Education has also published the last in a series of home learning resources for children and young people with SEND. Go to: <https://tinyurl.com/gov-uk-send>

Croydon Music and Arts

Our vision is to give children and young people a voice through the arts. We do this by providing arts activity for young people to discover and develop the ways they would like to express themselves. Our artists work with young people in and out of school, but like everyone else, we have been looking at ways to work digitally.

We are launching [CMA Online](#), a new digital arts programme for young people aged 8 – 13, to begin at the start of the school holidays with **Your Story, Your Heritage, Your Croydon**. Young people are asked to explore their family heritage and send in a video to share that heritage with us. It can be a poem, song, dance or costume. Young people are all different and will have their own individual way of expressing their heritage.

Those who wish to share their heritage more widely will be included in a digital mosaic, which CMA will create to celebrate Croydon's cultural diversity and to be displayed in Croydon Museum and Libraries and at events around Croydon.

There will be other inclusive courses which young people can choose, and we are also planning to create some specially designed accessible courses.

Do have a look at our website to find out more: CMA-online.co.uk.

Transport update

We continue to work closely with Public Health England to implement travel assistance to support children and young people returning to education for the remainder of the 2019/2020 academic year. We are currently transporting over 300 children and young people with special needs and/or disabilities to over 50 different schools/colleges and over 65 families have taken up the offer of a personal budget to support them to take their child to school over this period. At the moment the number of children and young people travelling on vehicles has been greatly reduced, we have been able to achieve this because of the reduced number of children attending school.

We have been completing applications for travel assistance for September over the telephone and electronically. We have managed to make contact with the majority of our families whose child is starting or transitional school/college in September 2020 and have had support from our schools with this process too. However, if your child is starting or changing school/college in September, you require travel assistance and you have not been contacted by our service you should contact with Samer Adbis – Travel Assistance Case Manager or Koreen Sinclair – Personalised Travel Planner (see "Transport Contacts", right)

Sharing stories

What have children and young people been doing during lockdown?

Experiences of our children and young people with SEND have been varied during the COVID 19 Crisis.

We would like to share some of the positive, good news stories of what it has been like.

Beckmead Trust: Chromebook Project

Beckmead Trust have a number of specialist provision in Croydon to support pupils with autism, social and emotional health needs and challenging behaviour.

In response to school closure the Trust embarked on a project to provide all pupils with Chromebooks and laptops. They felt that appropriate IT devices for all pupils would reap many benefits, such as:

Transport contacts

If your child is starting or changing school/college in September and you need travel assistance, contact Samer Adbis or Koreen Sinclair.

- Samer Adbis – Travel Assistance Case Manager
Samer.adbis@croydon.gov.uk
- Koreen Sinclair – Personalised Travel
Koreen.sinclair@croydon.gov.uk

If you have any concerns or questions about our travel service contact Jackie Wright at jackie.s.wright@croydon.gov.uk or 07742 405439

For day-to-day transport queries, such as cancellations or timetables, email passenger.transport@croydon.gov.uk

- access to online learning activities
- regular communication with school staff and peers
- reduction in a sense of social isolation
- focus to reduce risks of becoming involved in anti-social behaviours.

Feedback and evidence of the impact of this initiative has been overwhelming positive. Young people can now access their work, reconnect with friends and teachers as well as providing relief to the stress of having to share devices in larger households. Some parents have also commented on how the devices have relieved the financial burden of buying resources and additional technology to support home learning.

Dhruv's Story

Dhruv, a pupil at Bensham Manor School, has made the most of school closure to enjoy a range of outdoor activities and develop try other interests. He has visited local woodlands and enjoyed building dens. He has learnt to cook some new and cool foods, with donuts being his favourite. He has even painted his garden fence. Dhruv's favourite activity is cycling and he gets out on his bike every day.

