



Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to you as part of the ongoing regular communication to Parents and Carers during this period of further changes and restrictions. It has not been the start to the New Year we were all hoping for.

I am hopeful that by maintaining regular contact with you I can provide some clarity on the current guidance regarding attendance at school of vulnerable children and young people, including those with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The Government have supplied further guidance to Local Authorities alongside an open letter to families from the Minister for Families and Children Vicky Ford MP. The link to this can be found at the bottom of this letter.

The current position is that we need to protect the NHS by flattening the curve of transmissions and as part of that response;

- Only those children identified as vulnerable (Including those with EHCP's) and the children of critical workers should continue to access early years, school and college provision.
- Provision should continue to be in place to support the attendance of those children, however, parents may choose to access remote learning or a combination of attendance and remote learning.
- Where schools and settings encounter circumstances resulting in them not being able to offer full time provision (where families want this) there should be open and honest conversations with families and this should be re-established as soon as it is safe to do so.

If you don't want to send your child to school at the moment and would prefer that they are accessing remote learning, this will be recorded as an authorised absence.

If your child is currently progressing through a statutory assessment for an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), the way that assessment information is gathered may be different with some of this being done virtually, the Local Authority and Health colleagues are continuing to work to statutory timescales where possible.

You may have received notification of lateral flow testing taking place in secondary schools and colleges, this is the rapid on site Covid tests that settings will be issuing to help them identify those students who may have contracted Covid 19 but are asymptomatic, this is to help them manage infection rates in their settings. Testing is voluntary, however can we please encourage students to participate where possible.

The full guidance can be found via the link at the bottom of this document.

The Parent Carer Forum (PCF) are meeting with the Local Authority on a regular basis and are doing a really good job of highlighting any issues that are being brought to their attention and need addressing as part of the Covid response.

The Local Offer site continues to be the dedicated place where we share information with families, young people and our partners. A Covid 19 page provides specific information and

**Eoin Rush**

Director of Children, Families and Schools

updates on government guidance, a range of support services and wellbeing links. The link to page is available below.

Can I take this opportunity to thank parents and carers for their continued hard work in supporting children and young people to access school and participate in home learning in these unprecedented times.

Best Wishes and Stay Safe

**Ronnie Hartley**

**Head of Children and Young People, Specialist Services**

**Minister Vicky Ford's letter:**

To all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), their parents/carers and families, and others who support them. <http://eastridinglocaloffer.org.uk/coronavirus/>

**Latest Government Guidance:**

Further education guidance for restricting attendance during the national lockdown

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/952443/210114\\_School\\_national\\_restrictions\\_guidance\\_FINAL\\_14012021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952443/210114_School_national_restrictions_guidance_FINAL_14012021.pdf)

**Rapid testing guidance in secondary schools and colleges**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-asymptomatic-testing-in-schools-and-colleges/coronavirus-covid-19-asymptomatic-testing-in-schools-and-colleges>

**Local Offer Covid 19 Page**

<http://eastridinglocaloffer.org.uk/coronavirus/>