

## EHCP relaxation – is this a contradiction to safeguarding?

Monday 11 May, 2020

***“This is the time to step-up not to step-back”***

The fundamental strands to a child’s Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are an accurate description of need, combined with an aspirational view of their outcomes over time. The plan is the legal basis on which their rights are safeguarded. As a society we all have an obligation to safeguard children. This means protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of their health or development, ensuring that they are growing up in environments consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, and acting to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

The relaxation of EHCPs during the Covid-19 pandemic to a point that Local Authorities and health bodies “must consider...what they can reasonably provide in the circumstances” (DfE guidance, April 2020) could place many children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) at risk of their health and development being impaired, without provision that can meet their needs and a resulting inaction that will severely limit their outcomes. How can this be considered reasonable? In a time of crisis children rely on the adults around them to step-up not to step-back. Their needs become ever more acute; without the right support for them or their families, they risk becoming isolated at home.

As a provider of schools and services for children with EHCPs, BeyondAutism has continued to deliver education and support to all our pupils and their families. We continuously assess risk and implement solutions, striving to ensure that they are safeguarded. We have done this by thinking out of the box, not allowing pre-Covid structures and processes to become a limiting factor, by all working and communicating differently. We now look forward to a future where we have burst out of the boxes we were previously contained within.

**This is not the time to relax anything. This is not the time to cling to old ways of working, delaying progress and ultimately the outcomes of children. This is the perfect time to step-up, to innovate and to lead the way.**

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