

2nd September 2024

Dear School Leader,

Our SEND Transformation team is continuing its work to deliver positive and lasting change for Northern Ireland's SEND system. You may recall that in June, we provided you and SENCOs with an update on the current position of the transformation project. This included a feedback form which remains open. If you missed this update you can catch up by accessing the link below.



[Go to this Sway](#)

Thank you to all that watched the update in June and provided feedback, this is greatly appreciated. We have taken your feedback on board and will continue to do so whilst we complete the design of the new model and move through this transitional term to implementation in 2025. We want to make sure we are supporting you and your staff in preparation for this change. We also want to ensure that our staff are ready to provide the best possible support to all our children and young people so they can reach their full educational potential.

Attached you will find information on how this transitional term will operate as we prepare to move to the local team's model in 2025. As we advised you in the June update, children, young people and schools, will still be able to access Support Services while we work to establish our local teams and Regional Management Unit. However, during this transitional period there will be some changes to how we offer support. We intend to use this term to focus on prioritising the current waiting lists and clear as much of these as possible before implementation of the new local team's model. Consequently, we will be placing a primary emphasis on our universal and targeted programme of offer to enable this to happen, with direct referral only being for children with the most significant and complex needs.

Alongside this approach we are also going to use this time to commence training for our schools and SENCOs, on areas such as the Graduated Response Framework and the new Request for Involvement Form, so that you and your staff feel more prepared for the implementation of the new model in 2025. All training and associated subcover is subject to funding and we are currently working to put together business cases to try to secure this funding.

The update attached provides details on support available to educational settings in this Autumn Term. It is important to note that the Educational Psychology gatekeeping role has been removed from now, except for Early Years where it will continue during this transitional period. This does mean there will be some changes to how to access support, but we have tried, where possible, to minimise the impact of this on you.

“To inspire, support and challenge all our Children and Young People to be the best that they can be.”

Education Authority

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Within the attached documents there are details on the programmes of offer for Pupil Support Services and Early Years. We have tried to simplify the process to give you more access to support such as advice and guidance without the need for a referral. Each service area has criteria for requesting direct support and in some areas, this may be different to what you have experienced previously therefore it is important that you familiarise yourself with the information attached. However, there will be no changes to the referral pathways and programme of offer for the Sensory and Medical Needs Service at this time.

There is also information on what to do for referral in exceptional cases, a summary of the process once a request for school-based support has been made and, on a separate attachment, the Interim Request for Support Form that needs to be completed to request direct support form services. This form is the same as the School Based Consultation Form you would have previously completed but has been slightly amended to remove the Educational Psychology element. This means SENCOs can make direct referrals to service areas for those who meet the identified criteria. This is an interim solution whilst we await the development and roll out of the new management information system which will support our schools and local teams once these team are established.

During this term the Educational Psychology Service will also continue to provide support for children and young people with a range of Special Educational Needs by enhancing their learning, development, and emotional wellbeing in line with business as usual. The service will continue to focus on their statutory function by contributing to annual reviews with priority given to Years 6,7 and pre-school children, and the completion of outstanding psychological advice as part of the statutory assessment process.

Each mainstream setting at primary and post primary phase will be allocated a named Educational Psychologist who will arrange to carry out an initial planning meeting from October 2024. At that meeting schools can discuss those children or young people for whom they wish to request psychological consultation. Where there are immediate concerns, schools can contact their named Educational Psychologist as per agreed referral pathways. The Educational Psychology Service has identified key strategic priorities to address areas of high-profile SEN including, children experiencing Emotionally Based School Nonattendance (EBSNA). More details of this work will be shared with schools in due course. The Service will continue to promote the emotional health and wellbeing of the school community by supporting staff in fostering a culture that prioritises staff well-being which will have a positive impact on the well-being of children and young people.

We appreciate going through change can be difficult however, we need to ensure that the future delivery of our services meets the growing and complex needs of our children and young people. We will continue to engage with you and review the changes made in this interim period to inform the refinement of the new local team's model. We recognise this change needs to be stepped and that change will be ongoing as we aim to provide excellent and equitable support for all children and young people. We would like to thank you, your SENCOs and all staff for your continued ongoing support as we progress through this transformation.

Yours sincerely



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