

## Family Voice Questions from March and April 2022

We have taken the questions you asked us to SCC for a response. Please see the answers to these below. This will be a regular communication with our members, so please keep the questions coming. Also please let us know if you need further information or clarification of the answers. You can email your questions to [contact@familyvoicesurrey.org](mailto:contact@familyvoicesurrey.org) or complete the online form using this link [Tell us your story | family-voice-surrey \(familyvoicesurrey.org\)](#)

### When is the deadline for reapplying for post 16 transport?

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We've written to all parents of post-16 students advising them that a new application should be submitted for assistance, the deadline for submitting applications is 13<sup>th</sup> May for 16-19 year olds and the 20<sup>th</sup> May for 19-25 year olds. We will still assess applications submitted after these deadlines, it's just that arrangements (if eligible) may not be in place for the start of September.

For Year 11 transfer, the deadline was April 29.

However the application portal won't close. If there is a late change of placement etc we could consider assessing these in-line with others.

### What can parents do if they are told there are no transport providers available to take their child or young person to school?

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In cases where we have not been successful in sourcing a transport provider, we will work with the family to negotiate the best and most effective way to support travel to school and reimburse where appropriate.

The notice on the transport website is:-

#### May 2022

The national crisis of escalating fuel costs and a national driver shortage has meant that some taxi companies are not able to provide transport for our children, or routes being retendered at inflated prices. It is therefore a real challenge trying to deliver our statutory obligations whilst addressing policy adherence, driver shortages and higher costs. For many families, the only assistance we are able to offer currently is financial support to make their own arrangements, though we appreciate that this is not an option for some. We sincerely apologise for any inconvenience caused and we are continuing to work hard to try and provide solutions. We thank families for their patience and understanding.

Families can communicate with their SEND officer about any ongoing concerns they have with transport and attendance.

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### **What support is there for children and young people with PDA or extreme demand avoidance?**

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Advice guidance and support is available from Autism Outreach to schools via a referral process. Schools can also contact the Educational Psychology consultation line via business support for individualised support. In addition, Mindworks have support available to families [Support for parents, carers and families :: Mindworks Surrey \(mindworks-surrey.org\)](#)

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### **What support is available to young people with an EHCP who don't meet the criteria to be supported by the Transition Team or the Locality Teams, and how can this be accessed in a timely manner before families reach crisis point?**

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Paul B emailed - awaiting response

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### **Is there a new rule for no sideways course changes after 19 under EHCP? So if a YP wanted to continue learning but the course they wanted to do was at the same level as the one they have just completed would this be possible and what is the process for this?**

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The funding for courses in colleges means that for provision to continue there needs to be progression. Therefore it is less usual for courses to be offered at the same or similar level, as funding will not be available to colleges where this is the case.

Where a young person is exploring vocational options they should take advice and guidance from the individual college on appropriate career routes.

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### **What is the policy regarding free school meals for eligible children who are unable to attend due to anxiety, health problems or exclusion?**

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It is for the school to make the decision considering their values, public responsibility and doing the “right thing”; by not providing free school meals (FSMs) schools could be seen to be discriminating against disadvantaged/vulnerable families and children as they would be negatively impacted financially and not accessing their entitlement to a FSM.

All schools now have access to the Wonde platform which can supply vouchers to families easily and discreetly.

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### **Transparency of the panels – why are parents not automatically given sight of requests sent to panel and panel outcome?**

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Requests that are sent to panel should be coming following an annual review meeting attended by the family. There should not be anything requested unless it has first been discussed at an annual review meeting.

If you have had a different experience to this, please discuss this with your case officer in the first instance, FVS would also like to hear from you so as to make representation to the local authority and understand how the process could be improved.

### **How can parents find out about the admissions process and why is there no communication with parents from the admissions team during the EHC needs assessment and Key Stage Transfer process?**

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Communication about admissions should be provided through the SEND case officer to families.

Following feedback the teams now hold weekly meetings with admissions to ensure they can update families appropriately as information is shared

If you have had a different experience to this, please discuss this with your case officer in the first instance, FVS would also like to hear from you so as to make representation to the local authority and understand how the process could be improved.

### **Can you get a personal budget and/or direct payments for educational rather than social care purposes?**

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The Surrey strategy for personal budgets and direct payments is currently being reviewed in partnership with Surrey Coalition, <https://surreycoalition.org.uk>, the new strategy will be rolled out in the Autumn term once it is complete. All children and young people can request a personal budget as part of the EHCP and it can support education, health or care elements. The law states:

A personal budget is an identified amount of funding that the Local Authority (LA) can give to a child's parent(s) or a young person (over 16 years) in order to secure particular provision that is specified, or proposed to be specified, in the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Personal budgets in Surrey have been used for:

Therapies; Drama; Respite; Sports, Music or tutoring in line with needs within the EHCP.

### **What is the purpose of a personal budget if you don't receive direct payments?**

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Ordinarily, a personal budget is accompanied by a "direct payment" agreement, where the family receive money to be spent as agreed.

A personal budget might be agreed where a provider has been identified and the money is paid directly by SCC to the provider.



**Having parent carers and CYP as part of the training process for case officers is something that we frequently ask about - is this something that could be considered in the future? This would really allow case officers to understand the challenges parent carers face**

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There have been webinars presented to case officers that have included parents within the training. This is something we would like to use more in the future. We welcome a discussion about how best to incorporate input from parents into our training for staff.

**It would help if parents were automatically told who their child's case worker is, especially when they leave and someone new takes over**

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When there is a need the case worker for a family (due to maternity leave or a change of personnel), the expectation of teams is that new case officers are introduced to families at the first possible opportunity and within the first two weeks of starting.

As an authority we are working hard to retain our staff and have formal training plans in place to ensure staff receive the training they need to feel confident in their role.

When the EYES system is launched (there will be active demo session provided to parents by our implementation team) this will track the active case officer in real time so families will have access to this information directly.