

To:  
Parent Carers  
Gloucestershire

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**Phone:** 01452 425000

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**Date:** 07.06.2022

Dear Parent Carer,

I want to update you on our plans to address the increasing backlog with issuing Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) within the statutory 20-week timeline. I have also written to all Head Teachers with this update.

From a previous update from the SEND Service at GCC, you may be aware that the Service has been working with a significantly increased demand for EHCPs. The current position of demand in Gloucestershire is echoed across many Local Authorities. This, along with the national shortage of Education Psychologists, is impacting on our best efforts to remedy the backlog.

The SEND Service has taken action to address the areas of concern in several ways outlined below:

- Increasing our EHCP casework capacity from Term 5 (2022)
- Securing agency EHCP caseworkers from Term 5 (2021)
- Increasing our Education Psychologist capacity - new starters during Term 2/3 and Term 4 (2022)
- Securing agency Educational Psychologists from Term 5 (2021)

This approach has had some impact but not what we were seeking to fully achieve. As a result of this and knowing the challenges of securing short term increased numbers of Education Psychologists, the Service is taking further action to address the backlog with a view to moving into September 2022 in a more positive position.

**Next Steps:**

We have made three key decisions to address this challenge and most importantly, ensure children whose EHCP is agreed have the increase in support as soon as possible.

The three areas are set out below:

## 20-week funding

We have heard from schools of the impact of delays in funding when plans are over the 20-week timescale. As a result of this, GCC SEND Services will, from Monday 6th June, fund Plans that have been agreed from the 20-week date in which they were due to be issued.

To do this, draft EHC Plans will be heard at panel at the earliest opportunity and agreed or refused. Where Plans are agreed, the funding will be available to the school from the 20-week date in which the Plan should have been issued. Schools will be provided with the backdated funding once the panel decision has been made.

This change of practice is a short-term position in recognition of the current delays issuing Plans. The Service has put a planned end date on this arrangement and will review the backlog position at the end of Term 2 (2023) to consider if this approach should be extended.

Please see illustrative examples below.

### Example 1

Tom is Year 4. The 20-week deadline for the plan was 25th April 22.

Due to delays with the EP statutory advice and casework, this did not reach panel until 8th June 22.

This means that Tom has not had his plan within the 20-week timeframe and the school have not received funding that comes with the plan.

On 8th June 22 panel the LA agreed that the plan should be issued and funded. The top up funding to the school for a full year agreed by panel is £4,000. As this has been agreed 6 weeks later than the 20 weeks, the school will be provided with funding from the 20-week date of 25th April 22 when the plan should have been issued.

### Example 2 (subject to review)

Markus is Year 8. The plan is requested on 14th October 2022, the 20-week deadline is 3rd March 2023.

Due to delays with the EP statutory advice and casework, this did not reach panel until 15th March 23.

This means that Markus has not had his plan within the 20-week timeframe and the school have not had the funding that comes with the plan.

On 15th March 23 panel the LA agreed the plan should be issued and funded. The top up funding for the full year agreed by panel is £3,000 to be provided to the school. The funding will commence from 15th March - the date of issue.

## Temporary cessation of Educational Psychology (EP) traded services to schools

Gloucestershire Education Psychology services are provided to schools as a traded service. This means that schools can purchase sessions of EP time and in agreement with the EP, can use this time throughout the year for children in the school.

A large proportion of these sessions will have been completed by the end of Term 5 with some having been planned to be delivered in Term 6 (the current term).

To make best use of our EP capacity we have, we have decided to focus on our statutory assessments for EHCPs and we will not be delivering any traded sessions during Term 6. This will assist in reducing the backlog of statutory advice.

### **Non-Statutory Funding**

To meet children's needs in as timely a way as possible, GCC SEND will be developing a model of non-statutory funding. The intention of this initiative is for schools to be able to apply for additional funding over and above the £6,000 notional funding to provide support for a child without the need for an EHCP.

This does not preclude schools or parents requesting an EHCP. It is hoped, however, by providing a level of provision to meet needs earlier, this will assist the child and may reduce the need for an EHCP in the future.

Further details around this initiative will follow shortly.

Should you have any questions about any of the above please email:

[sengenq@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:sengenq@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

Yours sincerely



**Kirsten Harrison**  
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