

Dear SENCo,

We are writing to you in relation to the Mid and South Essex major incident declaration due to increased local pressures on the NHS from COVID-19 (as declared by the Essex Resilience Forum). In response to this NELFT has to make some changes to the community paediatric and therapy services we provide so that we can support the increasing demand on the NHS. This means that the support we are currently able to provide is geared toward sustaining the NHS' critical and essential functions and that activities outside of this remit might be scaled down. The level of the reduction in service might vary slightly across time taking into account staffing capacity, which is being impacted by redeployments but also sickness and/or COVID-19 related isolation. We would like to take this opportunity to update you on our current position for each of our therapy services. Please note that the majority of contacts will be carried out virtually first where possible:

Physiotherapy appointments are being prioritised according to clinical need. For educational settings this means we will be prioritising equipment issues, problems arising due to transition and children who have deteriorated. We will be providing blocks of appointments for children following surgery or Botox and clinics for lycra and splints will also be continuing. We will endeavour to contribute to initial EHCP assessment requests and to support established EHCPs. In the meantime, please continue to use the child's current class programme until we are able to review and update it. If you have any urgent concerns please phone **01277 695200** and leave a message or email Brentwood.IntegratedTherapyTeamAdmin@nelft.nhs.uk.

The **Speech and Language Therapy** team will be contacting you to arrange a phone call or a video call through which we will be able to discuss the caseload of children at your school, prioritising those children with an EHCP or an annual review that is due this term, and those children with a specific speech or language disorder that is having a significant impact on their everyday life. At this time we may not be able to offer reviews to children who have a care plan that is still current. We will discuss the children you are concerned about and considering a referral for. During these calls we will aim to cover what the children's outcomes should be and what we can help you put in place to support the child in school. We will be aiming to support you with these children through advice as our capacity to offer assessments will be reduced. If you would like to speak to a Speech and Language Therapist please email BasildonChildrensTherapies.admin@nelft.nhs.uk and a member of our team will call you back.

The **Occupational Therapy** team will continue to prioritise appointments according to urgent clinical need. This includes urgent equipment or access issues that affect a child's safety, or impact on their ability to function in school, or where a child has deteriorated significantly and urgent OT advice is needed. OT will be provided where required following surgery or upper limb Botox. We will endeavour to contribute to initial EHCP assessment requests and to support established EHCPs. If OT advice has been given previously or a programme is in place, please continue to follow this until we are able to review it. If you have concerns about a child and would like to speak to an OT please contact the Children's OT Duty Desk on **0300 300 1670 Mon – Fri 10.00 – 1.00** or email ThurrockChildrenstherapies.Admin@nelft.nhs.uk.

Our website has a wide range of resources and information that may be helpful for schools, nurseries or parents and can be found at: <https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/services-essex-childrens-integrated-therapies>

We foresee this being the situation until the end of the spring term at the earliest, but will keep you informed of any changes. We sincerely apologise for any inconvenience these changes might cause but would like to thank you for your continued support.

Kind regards,



Michael Caruana Smith
Head of Children's Services Essex and Thurrock