**Coronavirus FAQs** [20/03/2020](https://amazesussex.org.uk/faqs-about-the-coronavirus-for-parent-carers-of-children-with-send-brighton-hove/)

**What is Coronavirus?**

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It’s caused by a virus called coronavirus.

We know that families caring for a child with SEND may be particularly worried about the COVID-19 coronavirus. We therefore wanted to share some information for parents and carers that might help. You can access current UK Government Guidelines and advice [**here**](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public)

**What are the symptoms of Coronavirus?**

The NHS has identified the symptoms as experiencing either: -

* A high temperature – you feel hot to touch on your chest or back
* A new continuous cough – this means you’ve started coughing continuously

**Should I go to the doctor if I have a temperature or cough?**

No. The NHS advise that anyone with symptoms should stay at home for at least 7 days. If you live with other people, you and they should stay at home for at least 14 days to avoid spreading the infection outside the home. If you get worse or your symptoms last longer than 7 days you should call NHS 111.

**Am I or my child in a “vulnerable group”?**

The government hasn’t given any specific advice on vulnerable children but has said the following groups should be particularly vigilant in social distancing during the coronavirus outbreak:-

* aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
* under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (ie anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds):
* chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as [asthma](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/asthma/), [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease-copd/), emphysema or [bronchitis](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/bronchitis/)
* chronic heart disease, such as [heart failure](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/heart-failure/)
* [chronic kidney disease](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/kidney-disease/)
* chronic liver disease, such as [hepatitis](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hepatitis/)
* chronic neurological conditions, such as [Parkinson’s disease](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/parkinsons-disease/), [motor neurone disease](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/motor-neurone-disease/), [multiple sclerosis (MS)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/multiple-sclerosis/), a learning disability or cerebral palsy
* [diabetes](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diabetes/)
* problems with your spleen – for example, [sickle cell](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sickle-cell-disease/) disease or if you have had your spleen removed
* a weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as [HIV and AIDS](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hiv-and-aids/), or medicines such as [steroid tablets](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/steroids/) or [chemotherapy](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/chemotherapy/)
* being seriously overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above)
* those who are pregnant

**My child has an underlying medical condition. Should I take them out of school even if they are able to attend owing to having an EHCP?**

Children with EHC Plans are eligible to attend school although there are various priority groups so please contact your school about their arrangements.

**I am a single parent. What should I do if I need to self-isolate?**

You should follow the NHS advice about staying at home. Where possible you should try to get someone else to care for the child(ren) so that you can self-isolate in a separate room. You ideally need to keep two metres away from others, sleep in a separate bed, and use your own towels. Please see more advice here <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/>

Reaching Families are using their Facebook group to enable parents to ask for and offer help with things like shopping, deliveries, etc. You can join the group at the following link:

https://www.facebook.com/groups/132463616830248/

There are also a number of Mutual Aid Facebook groups being established at a local and county level.

You can search for mutual aid groups at <https://covidmutualaid.org>

The West Sussex group can be found at [www.facebook.com/groups/2676801359115345/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/2676801359115345/)

Some individuals and neighbourhoods are also offering help via a #viralkindness postcard that has taken off nationally.

**In addition to my child with SEND/underlying medical condition, I also care for an elderly relative. What should I do?**

As both elderly people and those with underlying medical conditions are at greater risk we advise you to do all you can to minimise spread of the infection according to the latest government advice <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

**Should I be asking my child’s doctor for additional medication for them at this time?**

GPs and pharmacies are reassuring patients that medical supply chains are in place and working well but we have also read stories about shortages and delays. Check your child’s supply of medication now and, if you are worried about running out, you should call your GP surgery or Community Paediatrician and talk to them about reordering.

**Should /can we stock up on personal protective equipment (PPE), hygiene products or over the counter medicine? Can GPs help as some shops are already empty?**

PPE like masks and gloves are in short supply across all local authorities. We’ll keep you updated if we get information about supply chains or solutions. Most supermarkets are now operating restrictions on the amount of sanitary goods, medicines and food staples that people can buy so theoretically supplies will be maintained but you may need to get there early in the morning or ask staff when deliveries are expected.

If you have care staff from an agency providing care to your home, they should continue to provide their own supplies of PPE and they should be able to order supplies as necessary through processes set up by Public Health England to respond to this pandemic.

If you already get pain relief medication via prescription, you will be able to reorder this via your nominated pharmacy, otherwise you would have to contact your GP first to request it. If the big supermarkets don’t have any paracetamol or Calpol, try your local corner shop or convenience store who may keep stocks behind the counter. Alternatively, ask some of your neighbourhood or online networks.

**My child has high anxiety/mental health issues and is very worried about the CV/Covid-19. What can I do to support them?**

The Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP), from the British Psychological Society, have released a statement:

Being out of school for an indeterminate length of time, with reduced access to outdoor play facilities and social spaces is likely to be difficult for many children.

Adults will need to be aware of their stress responses, and also be able to recognise how children and young people are exhibiting signs of stress. Signs of stress will vary for every child.

Adults will need to help younger children to understand and label their emotions, and help them to do things that will reduce their stress level. Exercise, art, drama, music and other creative activities are good choices.

It’s good to talk, the DECP have published advice on how to talk to children about coronavirus. Their advice was summarised as:

• Be truthful but remember your child’s age.

• Allow children to ask questions.

• Try to manage your own worries.

• Give practical guidance e.g. how to wash your hands.

The DECP resource paper for schools and parents can be found here: <https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Coronavirus%20and%20UK%20schools%20closures%20-%20support%20and%20advice.pdf>

Special Needs Jungle has produced this useful article: <https://www.specialneedsjungle.com/calming-coronavirus-anxiety-children-everyone-else/>

There are **easy to read**, **video resources and social stories** explaining coronavirus for children and young people, for example:

<https://inclusionnorth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Coronavirus-Easy-Read-Information-12.3.2020.pdf>

<https://www.healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/easy-read-advice-on-the-coronavirus-v1.pdf>

<https://littlepuddins.ie/coronavirus-social-story/>

<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/media/1960/coronavirus-mental-health-and-wellbeing-resources.pdf?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=coronavirus&utm_content=toolkit>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSsKQPqpS7A>

<https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Pandemics-and-the-Coronavirus.pdf>

<https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-03/Information%20about%20Coronavirus%20ER%20UPDATED%20130320%20SD%20editsAH.pdf>

**I have high anxiety/mental health issues of my own and I am getting very anxious about the CV/Covid-19, what should I do/who can help me?**

It is understandable to feel anxious in times like these. There are a number of online resources to help with coping strategies. In particular we would recommend the following: -

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-51873799>

<https://nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/#collapse0852c>

<https://afsp.org/taking-care-of-your-mental-health-in-the-face-of-uncertainty/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2020/mar/19/coronavirus-how-to-cope-with-anxiety-and-self-isolation-video-explainer>

**My child has an EHCP, can I send them to school?**

Children with EHC Plans are prioritised for school attendance, this also includes children with a draft EHCP.

IMPORTANT - Whilst children with EHCPs are part of the cohort of pupils prioritised for attendance at school the initial overriding principle is that if children can be safely supported and looked after at home then they should be. This is to maximise the process of social distancing in response to the Coronavirus.

If your child does not have an EHCP but a request has been made for one, the process will continue as much as possible, but it is important that families understand that whilst every effort will be made to process the agreed assessments and seek the required advice the process may be subject to unavoidable delays due to staffing absence and school closures.

The SEN Assessment Team will keep families informed.

Where an EHCP is in process and the required assessments and reports have not been completed the Local Authority will review what is available and consider their ability to decide whether a draft EHCP is appropriate as they reach week 16 of the process.

It is important to note, however, that a decision regarding the suitability of an EHCP will not be made unless appropriate reports are available on which to make this decision and draft an appropriate EHCP.

At the point of agreeing a draft EHCP the SEN Assessment Team will discuss with parents/school the wish for them to return to school.  Decisions and actions associated with individual pupils returning to school will be made as is most sensible for that pupil and taking into account the current challenges.

Schools are currently setting out their plans and need to work safely with their own staff shortages, so please check with your child’s school for individual circumstances.

**My child is going through EHC needs assessment but does not have a draft EHCP are they part of the priority group?**

Currently they are not part of the priority group.  We will continue with the assessment as best we can but until we issue a draft EHCP these pupils do not become part of the priority group.

At the point of agreeing a draft EHCP we will discuss with parents/school the wish for them to return to school.  Decisions and actions associated with individual pupils returning to school will be made as is most sensible for that pupil and taking into account the current challenges.

**I’m worried we will be asked to provide some education or learning for our children whilst they are off school, but I wouldn’t know where to start**

Some schools are already planning and preparing resources that will be sent home with the children. Clearly, this may be much harder for some children with learning difficulties or additional needs, or if you have to work from home as well as look after the children. There are lots of tips online from experienced home educators, including advice to create a clutter-free learning space and a schedule to help you all know what to expect and keep on track, but try not to put too much pressure on yourself or your children as this is going to be new for everyone. Remember exercise and fresh air will be beneficial for you all, so try to get plenty into your day, a great idea we’ve seen is to “walk to school”, to go for a walk in the morning before you start any activities, just as though you were walking to school.

Compass Card have compiled a web page called Leisure, Learning & Lock-down which provides useful information on things to do whilst coronavirus prevents us moving around freely. You can access this here:-

<https://www.compasscard.org.uk/news-and-events/leisure-learning-and-lock-down/?utm_source=sendinblue&utm_campaign=Compass_News_WSx__19_March_2020&utm_medium=email>

For further information on educational resources please visit our general information page on coronavirus.

**How long will schools be closed for?**

There has been no government advice yet on how long schools will be closed for.

**I’m worried I won’t be able to cope if schools are shut for a long time. Who should I call?**

Nobody knows how this situation will play out and if, when, and for how long schools will be shut. If you are worried about how you will support your child at home then please talk to your child’s school in the first instance. You can always contact West Sussex Carers Support Response Line on 0300 028 8888 or Samaritans 0845 790 9090, <https://www.carerssupport.org.uk/our-services/carer-response-line/> for additional support and seek peer support from other parents/carers on the Reaching Families Facebook Group or other local parent-led SEND groups.

The following resources have some helpful tips for coping with a lockdown:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/13/the-family-lockdown-guide-how-to-emotionally-prepare-for-coronavirus-quarantine>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-51936286>

**What support can we expect from Reaching Families and West Sussex Parent Carer Forum?**

Reaching Families will be supporting parents and families in a number of ways over the course of the next few weeks and months, including: -

* We will encourage parents to join and participate in our Facebook group which provides peer support to parent-carers across West Sussex <https://www.facebook.com/groups/132463616830248/?ref=share> and our Facebook page here <https://www.facebook.com/ReachingFamiliesNews/>
* We will use our Facebook group to enable parents to ask for and offer mutual practical support, for example, shopping, deliveries, etc.
* Our Face-2-Face project will continue to support parents through telephone befriending. We are also exploring providing telephone befriending to families who are self isolating. More information will follow on this shortly
* We are also exploring delivering webinars on many of our popular training courses and enabling our support groups to maintain contact using videoconferencing facilities
* Our staff will be on hand to answer any SEND related question during this period. You can contact our team via [admin@reachingfamilies.org.uk](mailto:admin@reachingfamilies.org.uk)
* We will continue to work with West Sussex Parent Carer Forum in maintaining and updating information on coronavirus

WSPCF is still here for you! Although our office is shut for the foreseeable future, we will continue to support parent carers and families in a variety of ways over the forthcoming weeks and months.

* We will continue to monitor our answerphone and emails (office@wspcf.org.uk) daily
* WSPCF will encourage parents to join our Facebook page and participate as they feel appropriate - <https://www.facebook.com/West-Sussex-Parent-Carer-Forum-357548895577/>
* We will offer information and support through our Facebook pages, along with daily tips and motivating messages
* We will use this time to continue to collect parent carer feedback, so look out for our regular polls and questions
* Parents can also follow us on Twitter - @ws\_pcf
* We are working hard to provide additional information and resources through our website – [www.wspcf.org.uk](http://www.wspcf.org.uk)
* We will continue to work with Reaching Families in maintaining and updating information on the coronavirus as the situation unfolds

**If my child’s PA is symptom free, would they still be able to come and help/take my child out if schools close?**

Yes

**What advice should I be giving to my child’s PA about self-isolating, whether they should still be working, etc.?**

As employers, we have responsibilities and we want to be sure we are doing things properly Independent Lives have produced some really useful, detailed guidance about what to do if your PA is self isolating either because they are displaying symptoms or because you feel it’s safer for them to do so for everyone’s wellbeing. See <https://www.independentlives.org/coronavirus> (the really useful info starts half way down the page).

**Is there any extra funding available if my child’s PA can do extra hours?**

There has been no statutory guidance on this as yet, so we would advise you contact your Social Worker or Choice Social Worker to discuss your individual circumstances.

**I am worried my child’s PA or respite provider will get sick/close and I won’t be able to cope. Who else can help me?**

If your PA is coming from an agency, please speak to them about fulfilling their hours, as they should put steps in place to ensure they provide their contracted care to the best of their ability.

For more advice on families caring for children with serious and complex health needs, see this information from Well Child, Carers UK & GOSH:

<https://www.wellchild.org.uk/2020/03/11/covid-19-information-for-parents-and-carers/>

<https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/health/looking-after-your-health/coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/news/coronavirus-covid-19-information-children-young-people-and-families>

**My child has currently got therapy support or other appointments coming up. Will these still be going ahead?**

All services are having to do emergency planning for a potential scaling back of services and will be working out how they can continue to provide services for families by alternative methods, e.g. by telephone. Community paediatricians and therapists are also considering how they can offer face to face appointments if they are clinically indicated.

We recommend you contact the provider in question if you have not heard the week before your appointment and confirm before you set off to travel.

All services will be asking you not to attend if you have any symptoms of Coronavirus, or if you are in a self-isolation period of 14 days because someone in the household has had symptoms. This also extends to whether you have returned from travel to certain countries in a specified period.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Do ensure you check the most recent guidance before you attend. This helps to keep the specialists safe in order for them to continue supporting families as best as they can through this time.

**Money questions**

**My child would normally receive free school meals and I am worried about the extra costs of feeding my family when the schools are closed**

Under normal circumstances, schools are not expected to provide free school meals to disadvantaged children who are not attending due to illness or if the school is closed. We expect schools to continue to provide support to these pupils if:

* They/or a family member are affected by coronavirus (COVID-19) and if your school closes temporarily
* We understand that schools will have different approaches to how they currently provide free meals to disadvantaged children.
* Schools are being advised to find out if their school catering team can provide meals or food parcels, and if not, they should offer families of pupils eligible for free school meals an alternative, which could be vouchers for local shops.
* Schools should check which pupils are eligible and currently in receipt of free school meals, and vouchers should be made available to the parent or the adult with caring responsibility for that child.

**I am self-employed, or on zero hours contract, and am worried I can’t afford to stay at home to care for my child if the schools close. What should I do?**

If you're following government guidance because you have coronavirus symptoms, you'll be considered unfit for work. You'll also be considered unfit for work if you're staying at home, or 'self-isolating', because you've been in contact with someone with coronavirus. You'll get statutory sick pay (SSP) from day one if you're considered unfit for work and are usually entitled to it - check if you're entitled to SSP.

It's worth checking your contract - your employer might pay you more than SSP when you're sick.

If you're not sick but have been told to self-isolate and can't work from home, you should still get your contractual sick pay on top of SSP.

You can also check your rights to sick pay if you get coronavirus on the ACAS website. ACAS provides free advice to employees and employers. However, people should bear in mind that SSP is only £94.25 a week, below most people’s weekly wage.

If you’re self-employed and can’t work because you’re ill with coronavirus, you won’t be able to get statutory sick pay (SSP). If you pay national insurance you might be eligible to claim contribution-based or ‘new style’ ESA (Employment & Support Allowance).

If you are eligible for ESA you will get it from the first day you’re ill. You won’t have to provide a fit note. You can also claim ESA if:

* you’re not ill but you’re following government guidance to stay at home or ‘self-isolate’ and you can’t work from home
* you’re caring for a child who is ill with coronavirus or has been told to self-isolate

If you have a partner who is receiving benefits, you may still be able to get contribution-based ESA at the same time.

A dedicated helpline has been set up by HMRC to help businesses and self employed individuals in financial distress and with outstanding tax liabilities receive support. Through this, businesses and sole traders may be able to agree a bespoke Time to Pay arrangement. If you are concerned about being able to pay your tax due to coronavirus call 0800 0159559.

For further information on coronavirus and claiming benefits please visit:-

https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/coronavirus/

**How will I pay my rent or my mortgage if I have to stop working?**

Emergency legislation will be taken forward as an urgent priority so that landlords will not be able to start proceedings to evict tenants for at least a three-month period. As a result of these measures, no renters in private or social accommodation needs to be concerned about the threat of eviction.

At the end of this period, landlords and tenants will be expected to work together to establish an affordable repayment plan, taking into account tenants’ individual circumstances.

To support this announcement the government has worked with the Master of the Rolls to widen the ‘pre-action protocol’ on possession proceedings, to include private renters and to strengthen its remit. This will support the necessary engagement between landlords and tenants to resolve disputes and landlords will have to reach out to tenants to understand the financial position they are in.

Mortgage lenders have agreed they will support customers that are experiencing issues with their finances as a result of Covid-19, including through payment holidays of up to 3 months. This will give people the necessary time to recover and ensure they do not have to pay a penny towards their mortgage in the interim.

**How can I get food and essential items from the shops?**

Most of the major supermarkets have now imposed restrictions on shopping in order to ensure they remain stocked and able to serve customers. Restrictions include preferential times for older and vulnerable customers. The following links provide a summary of restrictions for each of the major supermarkets:-

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-51737030>

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/mar/19/uk-supermarket-restrictions-what-you-need-to-know>