

INFORMATION SHEET

Information During School Closures



The Government has closed all schools in order to prevent the spread of Covid 19. However, children with Education, Health and Care Plans and those who are vulnerable and have a Social Worker are still permitted to attend school.

The CBF know that many families will be facing extremely difficult decisions. These will often boil down to whether it is safe to send your child into school versus whether you can support your child at home for the foreseeable future. Please do what is right for your family in your circumstances and don't feel pressured by other people's opinions, below are some considerations and tips that might help you if you decide not to send your child to school:

1) Plan your support network

The Prime Minister's announcement on Monday 23rd March clarified that those who need to go out to deliver care to the vulnerable are able to do so. You may be able to create a circle of support from your friends, family and neighbours who are not self-isolating – Could a neighbour come in through the back gate and supervise your child in the garden whilst you take a break? Could a friend do your shopping and so you don't have to take your child to the supermarket? Just ask – you might be surprised who is willing to help!

2) Use Community Pages on Social Media

In light of the current pandemic many communities have groups of volunteers willing to help others. You may be lucky and find a teaching assistant/personal assistant who is at home and willing to help you out, but even someone to pick up the essentials and drop them off could be helpful.

3) Creating a new routine

Many children will find it difficult to be out of routine and this confusion and lack of control may result in challenging behaviours. Think about a new simple routine that your child can follow, it might help to display this visually. You could use free PECs from [Widgit](#) to do this. If your child uses a 'now and next' board this might help to introduce the new routine. Don't worry about the school routine, think of what makes your child happy and try to include some of those things every day. For more information on how to create a new routine please see information on our [Covid 19 information page](#) [please note some resources are still in development and may not be available until a later date so do check back]

4) Free School Meals

If your child receives free school meals, contact their school to find out how you can continue to get help with this. The Government has agreed to reimburse school's expenses until a voucher scheme is set up and so they should have something in place by now.

5) Maintaining the EHCP/Help from the school

Currently the law has not changed and the support in Part F of your child's EHCP does not have to be delivered at school. This means that if your child has 2:1 or 1:1 support in school, this should also be available to them at home and you could ask their school to send someone to the home to support them. In reality, this will need to be a discussion with your child's school about what is possible; support staff may be self-isolating, may be needed at school or may be unable to get to your home. In addition to this you will need to consider whether your child will tolerate a member of school staff suddenly being in their home.

If your child usually has input from a speech and language therapist or occupational therapist, try to find out if they are working from home and could give you any telephone or virtual sessions.

6) Meeting needs creatively

Some families may receive Direct Payments (DPs) to meet their child's Social Care needs. You may be fortunate enough to have a support worker who is still able to provide respite, however many respite centres are currently closed. Some Local Authorities are being more lenient about what DPs are spent on at this time and as long as you can show it is meeting a need and helping your child then there is a strong case for spending money on equipment during this period. Some suggestions include a trampoline to burn off energy, sensory equipment, items to create a safe space at home.

7) Paying members of the family

You may find yourself in a situation where your normal support staff cannot come to you. The Direct Payment (DP) Regulations generally state that DPs cannot be used to pay family members living in the same home as the person receiving the care. However, the exception for children is if it is necessary to 'meet satisfactorily the prescribed person's need for that service' or 'for promoting the welfare of the child in respect of whom the service is needed'. So, if no one is available for you to pay with Direct Payments you could reasonably argue that you should be able to pay yourself or a sibling living in the same house as your child. For more information on this please see our FAQ on [Coronavirus and the Law](#)

8) Make an emergency plan

This is in case you or your child need to go to hospital. In a folder you could put copies of your child's care plan, Positive Behaviour Support Plan, Communication Passport, Hospital Passport and any other important documents. We hope you won't need to use these but being prepared will save time and stress if you do. For more information on emergency plans please see our [Covid 19 information page](#) [please note some resources are still in development and will be available at a later date]

If your child is remaining in residential school or college and you are unable to visit during the current situation, please see our resource [Keeping in Touch With Home](#) which gives ideas about how to keep in touch. Please feel free to share this with the school or college. It would be helpful to have an emergency plan shared with the school (see 8 above) and to check the school have all the documents listed above ready in case they are needed.

The situation and guidance is changing fast and we know it is hard to make big decisions and to keep up with the guidance. We will do our best to share and summarise the latest and we are working on resources to help. Please do keep checking our [Covid 19 information page](#).

The Department for Education has issued guidance and has a helpline:

Answers to a wide range of questions can be found in guidance at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings>

It includes information about:

- educational provision for vulnerable children and children of key workers
- the closure of educational settings
- free school meals arrangements
- the cancellation of GCSEs, AS and A levels

If you are unable to find an answer to your enquiry, the department has set up a dedicated helpline for COVID-19 related education issues. Lines are open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm, and 10am to 4pm on Saturday and Sunday, and can be contacted on 0800 046 8687.

Last Updated: 27th March 2020