

Gloucestershire County Council

COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Information for parents and carers

Co-produced with the Parent Carer Forum

Issue 2



gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

COVID-19

Information for parents and carers

This is the second issue of frequently asked questions from parents and carers, and we have answered these as fully as possible below. In the current climate, national information and guidance can change over time, and so we will always do our best to keep you up to date with latest guidance.

Q1: Has a process been agreed by the Council/Clinical Commissioning Group for parents and carers to use direct payments to purchase equipment to meet the sensory needs of their children?

We understand that families want speedy authorisation for the purchase of sensory equipment, especially if larger items take time to be delivered. To be able to respond to families requests in a timely way we are reviewing requests to use Direct Payments differently on a daily basis. This will enable agreement to use the Direct Payment differently and for parents to be assured there will be an audit trail for use of funds outside of the usual agreement.



We are committing to provide a response to the initial query within a 24 hour period, there may be times we ask some further questions to get the response to you and will do this in the most timely way possible.

Our learning from this is that parents are asking for increased flexibility in using direct payments which we can take forward with the parent carer forum to consider how we do this in the future.

Parents can make contact with the **Disabled Children's duty service** on **01452 614194**, between 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday to ask about using their payment differently at this time.

Q2: Has a process been agreed for parents where they have a direct payment for their carers to access Personal Protective Equipment?

We are working in line with the Together for Short Lives Guidance regarding providing access to Personal Protective Equipment where parents have a Direct Payment.

We have already agreed that parents can use their Direct Payment to purchase Personal Protective Equipment.

Following updates on National Guidance on use of Personal Protective Equipment we are recommending that parents use this as the most up to date guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control/covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-ppe#scope-and-purpose> (updated 17th April 2020)

Where parents are unable to purchase Personal Protective Equipment using their Direct Payment, we are working with the national supply chain to make provision accessible to parent carers.

If parents have specific difficulties with immediacy whilst we are working on this can they please contact the Disabled Children's duty service to advise on access to provision.





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Q3: Supermarket vouchers for Free School Meals have become a topic of concern. Some supermarkets are putting very short validity dates on their electronic vouchers which mean parents have to use them within 7 days of issue. This can be difficult if an access to a printer is an issue, a family doesn't live near one of the big four supermarkets or if a family is self isolating. How can this be improved?

Whilst the Department for Education have set up a National Voucher Scheme for local supermarkets, many schools have already made their own arrangements which have been working well for them – therefore parents are likely to be experiencing differences in what they are receiving. There is an expectation that schools base their offer on the needs of their community and families and therefore if it isn't working for particular parents they should contact their school directly to discuss the options available to them.

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Q4: Please could we work on guidance to support families with supermarket shopping?

We understand that there have been cases of a parent and child being refused into a supermarket, despite the child wearing a sunflower lanyard. We are keen to work on guidance with the Carers Hub and will take this forward to support single parent families for example, where there is no choice but to take a child shopping with them.

The Parent Carer Forum, Gloucestershire County Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group will work in partnership to draft a letter which parents can request from our Family Information Service. This letter can be shared by the parent with the relevant supermarket to identify their child has additional needs and that the shopping is an essential need.

In order to facilitate this, when contact is made by email or by phone with the Family Information Service you will be asked for your child's name so this can be referenced against the SEN register, and added to the letter to be made available to individual families.

The **Family Information Service** can be contacted on **0800 542 0202** or by e-mail at familyinfo@gloucestershire.gov.uk

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Q5: There is a concern if I am unwell or my child is unwell I may need a change in my support plan to meet my child's needs.

We understand this is a difficult time for families. We are asking families to contact us if their child or their circumstances change so we can work on an individual basis to respond. As this is a very dynamic and changing situation for individual families and care providers we are unable to have specific advance plans for each family due to the variables at this time. We have worked with our care providers to ensure we have agencies who can respond to the needs of our children if support is needed.

We have a carers emergency scheme that can be accessed through the Gloucestershire Carers Hub, this is one of range of services the hub offers to parent carers. Contact details of the Carers Hub can be found at the end of the Newsletter.



Q6: There is concern that the volume of school work being sent home from schools is high and children with additional needs are becoming upset and overwhelmed, which in turn has the impact of escalation of challenging behaviours. Whilst many schools are reaching out to families and they are promoting good mental health and wellbeing, there are other reports of schools being less proactive to support families. What can be done about this?

This is a new situation for schools and teachers will be keen to support parents and families in ensuring that children are occupied and that they do not miss out. However, it is important that children are not overwhelmed and do not feel that they are under pressure to complete, for example, a full day's school timetable; individual and home learning is different from the classroom and the school environment.

Many schools have provided educational activities that children might do. It is important that families are able to balance home-learning with other activities that will keep children happy and occupied in a healthy way.

Parents are the best judges of what children need whilst they are at home. It is important to provide enjoyable and relaxing things



to do – reading and researching, creative activities, physical exercise, simply chatting and watching films. It is helpful to create a routine for children so that their minds are kept active with interesting tasks and challenges, however, parents do not need to try to replicate a school timetable.

Parents and carers should focus on what can be done as a closely confined family and how to get on. Teachers are aware of this and so, if a parent or carer feels that children are under pressure to complete a lot of learning tasks, please contact the school for advice on how to manage this.

It isn't clear how long the isolation requirement will be in place, and so schools will be doing all they can to help keep your child actively engaged during this time, in readiness for their return to school.

Schools want to ensure that they are supporting families and offering children every opportunity to stay connected to their learning, whatever age they are. As the new term starts, schools will move into a planned pattern of communication with children and families and will have the well-being of children as their first priority.

Where parents feel they have not had their concerns resolved with the school, they can contact our COVID mailbox for us to support parents with individual conversations with schools.

Covidschoolenquiries
COVIDSchoolenquiries@gloucestershire.gov.uk

We realise this is a challenging time for everyone and so please visit the link below to support your wellbeing.

Gloucestershire Carers Hub 0800 111 9000 or contact them via their webpage which is <https://gloucestershirecarershub.co.uk>

See also <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/public-health/advice-on-covid-19/looking-after-your-wellbeing/>





Q7: Parents are reporting that children's challenging behaviour is escalating because of being at home full time. Is there some guidance that could be issued around this?

The Government has provided Guidance for parents and carers on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing during the Coronavirus outbreak (updated March 20th 2020). This includes children with learning disabilities and children with Autism. Please refer to this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

In addition, our local services would also like to assure parents and carers that the CAMHS LD Team are still taking calls and are on hand to give advice to families regularly supported by them. The team would like to direct parents and carers to access the Challenging Behaviour Foundation <https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/> and National Autistic Society (NAS) <https://www.autism.org.uk/> websites in the first instance, where applicable. If parents and carers have any urgent queries or concerns then they can ring the Cheltenham office on 01242 634050, where a Nurse will be able to offer advice and guidance.

Q8: Is there any update on the rules for families about going out during the 'lockdown', where sometimes there is the need to take a child out, perhaps a drive in the car to support their sensory needs.

The Government has developed an FAQ page of 'do's and don'ts' during the Coronavirus outbreak (updated 29th March 2020). Point 15 of the article below refers to going out more than once a day if you (or someone in your care) has a specific health condition that requires them to leave the home. The example they have given, is of individuals with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism and that may need to go outside a few times a day. Please refer to this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do#can-i-exercise-more-than-once-a-day-if-i-need-to-due-to-a-significant-health-condition>

Our local police have outlined that the exceptions regarding staying at home include:

- ➔ to avoid injury or illness or to escape a risk of harm;
- ➔ to provide care or assistance, including relevant personal care to a vulnerable person, or to provide emergency assistance.

The Parent Carer Forum

Our partner is the Gloucestershire Parent Carer Forum and we will continue to work together to provide updates for parents and carers. Please visit <https://glosparentcarerforum.org.uk>

Well Child

Follow the link below for further information on COVID-19 from this national charity for sick children.

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



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Q9: My Plan and My Plan Plus Reviews – what's happening with these at this time?

Where a school is requesting support to undertake a My Plan or My Plan Plus an Early Help co-ordinator remains available to schools to support in this role. This includes supporting schools with reviews, virtually 12 weekly or more regularly based on the needs of the child and family.

Where Gloucestershire County Council undertake the My Plan or My Plan plus these are continuing as needed, where there is short breaks provision that underpins the plan this is being agreed in principle at this time in partnership with parents. Where necessary visits can take place face to face with good hygiene methods being followed and with social distancing taking place. Where this is not necessary visits are taking place virtually.

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Q10: There is some confusion around shielding – what is the latest guidance on this?

The shielded lists and identification of patients is being organised from central NHS.

If a family feel they should be identified as extremely vulnerable and haven't had a letter they can self register by registering on the portal: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable>

If a family have received a letter they equally then have to go on to the portal to register. This is an on-going process, so not all letters will have been sent out yet. GPs will be given a list compiled from the registrations to cross reference and verify the person meets the criteria. Flags will then be added to GP systems for accepted patients.

Medical Professionals will then be able to refer the person to the NHS Volunteer Responder Service for support. Being identified as extremely vulnerable will enable a referral to the volunteer responder service but that does not mean any local support from family, friends and neighbours needs to stop.

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Q11: I am worried about seeking medical care during the Corona virus outbreak.

These are very challenging and unusual times which can cause anxiety and confusion. Please be assured that people with a medical need will still be seen by GPs and Emergency Departments.

The Government advice is to stay at home, but this does not mean to the detriment of anyone's health. You are allowed to travel for medical reasons.

You know your children best, families caring for their children, need to trust their own judgement, and if their Child has worrying symptoms to seek medical care immediately rather than waiting until their child becomes more seriously unwell.



The Gloucestershire Carers Hub message during COVID-19



Carers and partner agencies

We understand that this is a worrying time for carers and, as such, are doing all we can to support carers through this situation.

Most of our communication channels remain open, though for the safety of carers and our staff, we are no longer providing face to face services. We are still available to offer support to carers during our normal opening hours (9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, but we will keep this under review and amend as appropriate) including information, advice and guidance over the phone and through our website, email and social media. Please do keep checking our website and social media for up to date information. The latest information from the government relevant for carers can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

At times like this contingency planning is at the forefront of our mind. Therefore, if you would like to talk about what might happen if you or your cared for becomes ill, please do phone. Whilst we may not be able to process registrations for the Carers Emergency Scheme as normal, we will continue to start the registration process for any carer who wishes to do so. We would request that carers are mindful that the registration processes may take longer than usually expected. It is really helpful to talk through emergency planning, even if you do not formally wish to register with the Carers Emergency Scheme. Information regarding the local Carers Emergency Scheme is available- <https://gloucestershirecarershub.co.uk/carers-emergency-scheme/>

We recognise that this is an increasingly isolating time for carers and we want to assure carers in Gloucestershire that we are here if you want to talk to someone. We will also be providing outreach calls to carers known to us, to offer emotional support, information, advice and guidance, as well as a conversation about contingency plans.

Of further interest may be the Jointly App which is supported by Carers UK. The app is available free of charge to all carers registered with the Gloucestershire Carers Hub. The app is there to support you with your caring role, and you can allow multiple individuals to log in and update information. The app can act as a live record of what is happening with the person you care for including appointments, updating medical details and medication.



Contact Gloucestershire Carers Hub

If you are a carer, please get in touch. If you know someone who is a carer, please look out for them at this time:

Phone: 0300 111 9000

Web: www.gloucestershirecarershub.co.uk

Email: carers@peopleplus.co.uk

Social media

Facebook: Gloucestershirecarershub

Twitter: @GCarersHub

Instagram: Gloucestershire_Carers_Hub

For Young Carers, please contact:

Gloucestershire Young Carers

Phone: 01452 733060

Web: <http://www.glosyoungcarers.org.uk>

Gloucestershire Parent Carer Forum

Phone: 07494 704564

Web: www.glosparentcarerforum.org.uk

Email: info@glosparentcarerforum.org.uk

Social media

Facebook: Gloucestershireparentcarers

Twitter: @CarerForum



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