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### **Life, but not as we knew it....**

We wanted to touch base with forums early into the quarter to see how everyone is doing, how you're coping with both forum life and home life as things have become very complicated and challenging for many over the last month. We hope that you are all managing to adapt to the new situation and life in lockdown and business 'as unusual'.

We also wanted to offer more reassurance around the DfE participation grant and we will soon be uploading a podcast from a live virtual chat that we hosted with Rotherham PCF and the DfE last week. Rotherham kindly shared their ideas and plans for how they are working differently this year, and the DfE reflected their position regarding the participation grant and how it might be used this year to get forums through the crisis - the lockdown does offer some new opportunities for connecting with families who had not attended traditional meetings or events, the key will be keeping linked, staying in touch and reducing isolation.

The team at Contact is still here and we are all working. We are here to support you, so please do contact your advisor or a member of the grants team if you need support generally, or with the grant application or monitoring.

Look after yourselves and we wish you all good health. Take care.

## **What's New?**

You can read our latest edition of What's new here: <https://e-activist.com/ea-campaign/action.handleViewInBrowser.do?templateId=339615>

We've put together some information on food shopping as we'd heard from

several places that parents were struggling with this. You might find this useful to share - it's in the email, and we've also added to the Covid-19 pages, which are being updated all the time: [contact.org.uk/covid-19](https://contact.org.uk/covid-19)

## DfE Grant - webinar and webchat

We held the annual grants webinar on 15th April and there was a fantastic live attendance. We've typed up the Q&A from the day and have uploaded them to our website along with the webinar recording and presentation.

If your forum will struggle to meet either the monitoring, or the application deadlines, please let a member of the team know so that we can offer support and agree a new date with you.

We ran a live webchat last Friday with Rotherham PCF and the DfE so that forums could listen to what Rotherham has been doing and get ideas for adapting during the lockdown. Some forums have gone virtual and are offering online programmes of meetings and informal catch ups. Others have said that they'll use this as an opportunity to test out new ways of working and reaching out to families that they have previously not engaged with. We'll be running further chat sessions and or webinars soon to accommodate the many forum members who were unable to get a place - if you have ideas to share with other forums, please get in touch with your advisor.

We're also running a webinar soon as a follow up to the live chat to give forums some practical tips on how to take their ideas forward.

## Community Matters

Community Matters ran a Zoom web chat for forums on operating during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was more for forums with premises who might pay business rates and provided tips on how they can to continue to operate. The chat was limited to 20 participants, but if there is further demand, Community Matters could run it again - or offer another topic that forums need. Let us know if there is something that you'd like Community Matters to offer.

If your forum is not yet registered with Community Matters, you can register by emailing [admin@community-matters.org.uk](mailto:admin@community-matters.org.uk).

## Contact's core offer to forums

We recently updated our core offer to forums and added this to our website. The main change this year is the addition of the CiC Employee Assistance Programme which we emailed out the details of last week. Up to 8 members from each forum will be able to benefit from this support which includes:

In a nutshell, the support includes:

- 24/7 telephone counselling
- Financial helpline and signposting; debt counselling and information
- Legal helpline
- Family Care helpline
- Online counselling
- Face to face counselling (6 sessions,) please note that this is currently suspended in line with government guidelines
- Wellbeing web portal – online resources
- Specialist advice/general information – Everyday matters

For forums

- Managerial Support service
- Guidance and advice on HR issues, policies and procedures
- Electronic communications toolkit
- Whistle-blowing support

We have received enquiries from a number of forums about including their staff or purchasing additional places and will send all forums an email soon about how we hope to make this happen.

\* During the lockdown, Contact will be modifying our offer so that we provide more virtual and online chats, webinars and support. The webinars that we have broadcast since lockdown have been the best attended that we've put on so far, so we will put on more - keep letting us know what you need from us. The team is still here and working - if you need support or guidance, contact your advisor or a member of the grants team as usual \*.

**Changes to the law on education, health and care needs assessments and plans due to coronavirus**

On 30th April 2020 the DfE published [Education, Health and Care needs assessments and plans: guidance on temporary legislative changes relating to coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

The notice referred to in the guidance is available here [Modification notice: EHC plans legislation changes](#).

Minister Ford, Parliamentary-Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, and Minister Whately, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Care, [have written a joint ministerial letter to children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers](#).

## Survey - life in lockdown

On Friday we launched a survey through the Disabled Children's Partnership (DCP) to help us gain more insight and evidence on the impact of the lockdown on families with disabled children.

The findings will be shared with the government to help influence their actions on the pandemic, and beyond. We've had over 1,200 responses so far and the survey is open for responses from across the UK. Please complete the survey to tell us how you are finding life in lockdown and help us to promote the survey amongst your members via your social media channels (see below).

New survey from @DCPcampaign – what does life in lockdown mean for disabled children and their families?

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LifeinLockdown> #SecretLifeInLockdown

Help us get the best picture of the impact of the lockdown on disabled children and their families – <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LifeinLockdown> #SecretLifeInLockdown

The survey will run until 9am on Monday 18th May.

The link to the survey is - <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LifeinLockdown>

## NEW Closed Facebook page for families with disabled children

Covid-19 has changed the way we all live but for many families caring for a

child with additional needs the impact has intensified the usual daily challenges and added layers of new ones.

We know that so many of you will have some great advice to share with other families like yours during this challenging time. At the same time you might also have a lot of concerns, questions and queries of your own.

That's why we've created a brand [new closed \(private\) Facebook Group](#) for parent carers to go where you can chat and share how you are feeling as a parent carer under lock down with others going through the same thing. Only other members of the closed group will be able to see any posts you make here.

Our new Facebook group opens today. All you have to do to become a member is to register [here](#) and you'll be all set to go.

The group will be moderated by Contact staff and when you register we'll ask you for a little bit of information about yourself so that we can make sure the group remains solely for families who care for a child with additional needs.

We're hoping that our new Facebook Group offers you a safe place to ask any questions, express any fears you might have and share your tips and experiences with other families at a time when we know many of you are facing extra-ordinary challenges.

## Cornwall travel policy amendments

Proposals by the LA to change transport arrangements for children and young people meant that many parents decided that a lack of safe and suitable travel arrangements would mean their children would not be able to take up their educational placement in September. Cornwall Parent Carer Council worked with the LA and other partners to consult with parents and hear their concerns which resulted in the proposals being revised.

We'll be uploading the full story next week to our [forum success stories page](#).

## Free workshops

We have developed some exciting online training. If your forum is interested, you can find out more by contacting Ellie Goff, our new Business Development Manager at [ellie.goff@contact.org.uk](mailto:ellie.goff@contact.org.uk).

Currently we have available to book:

- Positive Behaviour
- Money Matters
- Sleep
- Well-being

...and coming soon will be:

- How to make the best of meetings
- How to get the best for your child's education
- Finding help and support in your area

Please let Ellie know if there is an area of training that you would like to see that is not yet available. If you know of a service provider who might be interested in booking an online training event, please ask them to get in touch to see how we can meet their training needs.



**Get me out of here! A bit of light relief**

We were sent the link below to a film that Full of Life, the organisation supporting the forum in Kensington and Chelsea and hope that you agree that it provides some much needed levity during what are incredibly challenging times <https://vimeo.com/406774849>

## Raise free donations for Contact each time you shop online

As so much more of our shopping is taking place online during lockdown, please remember to use Easyfundraising to help to support Contact as you shop. It costs nothing extra.

You can sign up to help us on [our fundraising page](#).

Thank you!

## Coronavirus (COVID-19) testing

Unpaid carers such as parents with disabled children have now been added to the list of essential workers and those prioritised for COVID-19 testing in England. here are various ways to get tested, and home testing is also available.

You can find out more on the [Gov.uk website](#).

## Direct Payments and Personal Budgets - Fledglings

Many forums have been working with CCGs and LA's to ensure that families can use their personal budgets and direct payments in flexible ways during lockdown. We have heard of families being really creative like the family who bought a shed, disco lights and a glitter ball to recreate (in part) the disco their young person normally enjoys as a short break; the family who used their direct payment to buy equipment and ingredients so their young person could carry on the cooking course they were enjoying at college, and families of buying items like trampolines and gym equipment.

Contact has a not-for-profit online shop [Fledglings](#) which offers hundreds of products such as sensory equipment and toys. This may be useful to share with families who may be looking for new ways to care for their child safely and entertain them while they are at home. For more ideas on [entertaining children at home](#) visit Contact's dedicated Covid-19 webpages.



## *Part of the Contact family*

### **Gloucestershire Parent Carer Forum working with partners to improve support for families during Covid19**

Gloucestershire Parent Carer Forum has worked with their LA to produce regular bulletins to ensure that families get the right information and know what support is available. They have also been working with partners to try and find solutions to some of the challenges being raised by families during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A particular issue was access to food and shopping so the forum worked with the LA to produce a letter which families can show supermarkets to prove their child has additional needs. The letter can be obtained by any family with a child on the SEN register from the Family Information Service. This followed reports that some supermarkets in the county were not allowing children into supermarkets despite them wearing a sunflower lanyard.

The letter also highlights the need for supermarkets to be flexible about issues such as queuing (which can be difficult for some children) and the need for some families to buy multiple items of food (where children eat only certain things or have intolerances).

The forum has also been working to raise the issue of vouchers where short validity dates on electronic vouchers were presenting challenges to those self-isolating, without access to a printer, or not living near one of the big four supermarkets.

[Co-produced information from the forum and local authority](#) - Issue 1

[Co-produced information from the forum and local authority](#) - Issue 2

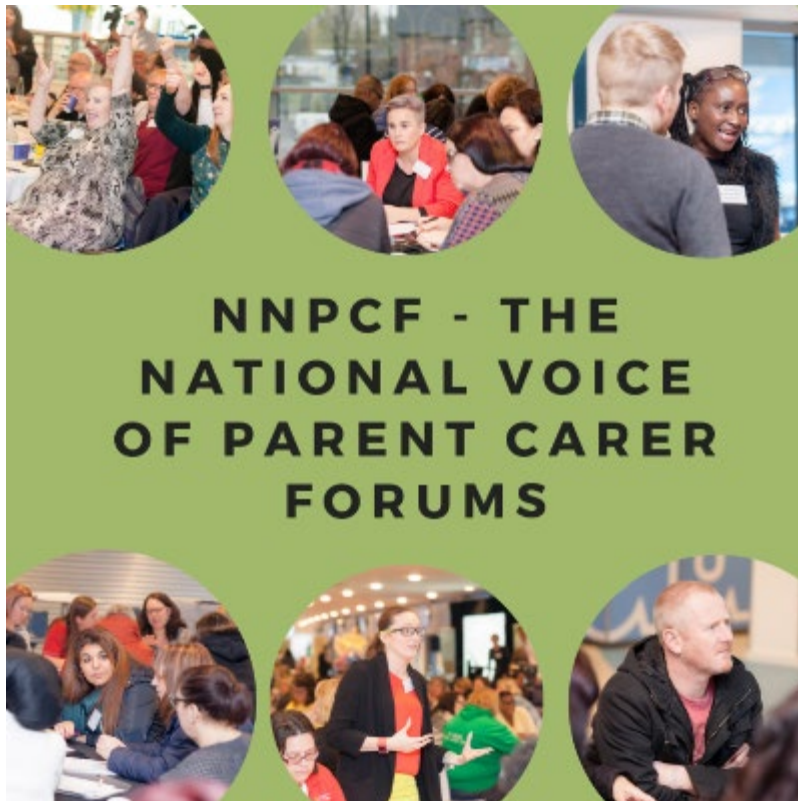


## Nut & Bolts webinar

At the end of March we finished off the Leading your Forum course with a webinar on where to find resources to support the 'Nuts & Bolts' of running a forum. You can find the webinar and slides on our [resources page](#) along with our other past webinars.

## Forum participation stories

We want to be able to share positive examples of forums' work and their impact in every newsletter - if your forum would like to share something with other forums in the next newsletter or on our website, please contact Sue Mennear - [sue.mennear@contact.org.uk](mailto:sue.mennear@contact.org.uk). - we'd especially like to hear about how you have continue to operate during lockdown - can you help to inspire other forums?



RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The NNPCF has been working really hard to ensure that the messages from our members are being fed into government. Just prior to lockdown we met with the new Children and Families Minister, Vicky Ford, and since the school closures and subsequent lockdown we have been working with DfE, NHS England and Department of Health and Social Care to influence policies by feeding in the views we have collected from you, to highlight where things are working well, and where changes need to be made – some decisions were changed as a result of our input.

We've also been part of a communications group with DfE, NHS England, Contact and other partners to ensure that clear and consistent messages are conveyed regarding Covid-19 to families.

You can find out more about our submissions to the DfE and NHS England on our [news page](#).


[See also our latest update on Covid-19.](#)

And our position statement regarding the [SEND easements](#).

We also were overjoyed by the acknowledgement, and endorsement of our recommendations in the recent [Public Accounts Committee Report](#).

### Useful Information

- [SEN 2 Data](#)
- [DfE Newsletters](#)
- [CDC Case Law](#)
- [SEND Single Route of Redress \(SEND Tribunal National Trial\) Guidance and toolkit](#)
- [NNPCF news updates](#)
- [SEND Joint Inspection Outcome Letters](#)
- [Find your forum](#)

 Forward to a friend

