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# contact *For families with disabled children*

Dear forum members,

We hope that you are coping with the monumental changes affecting all our lives as a result of the coronavirus. We understand that for so many of you who are caring for children with additional needs, this will be an extremely worrying time.

We wanted to let you know that Contact is still here to support you and we wanted to share the information we have so far about the Covid-19 situation and its impact on families with disabled children.

We'll keep our website and social media channels updated as we find out more and as the situation develops. We are currently developing a new section on our website to address some of your concerns about Covid-19 – we'll let you know as soon as it's ready.

In the meantime please do encourage friends and family to sign up to What's new to keep up to date with all the most important news and information for families with disabled children.

Take care and stay safe,

Amanda Batten  
Chief Executive  
Contact, the charity for families with disabled children

## **Government guidance on maintaining educational provision published today**

As you know all schools will shut today, Friday 20 March. Exceptions have been announced for children of key workers, vulnerable children with social workers and children with [education, health and care \(EHC\) plans](#). [The government has now published guidance on this](#). In the guidance it states that schools are being asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children - children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the Covid-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

Vulnerable children include children who are supported by social care, those with

safeguarding and welfare needs, including child in need plans, on child protection plans, 'looked after' children, young carers, disabled children and those with EHC plans.

We are aware of widespread concern among families, as many children with EHC plans have medical conditions putting them in the vulnerable group for coronavirus. Others may find changes in the usual school environment, staffing or routine difficult to cope with. Understandably parents do not want to put their children at risk by forcing them to attend school. The guidance says that if it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be and if a child needs specialist support, is vulnerable or has a parent who is a critical worker, then educational provision will be available for them.

### **Coronavirus and welfare benefits**

As well as worries about the health loved ones, you may also have concerns about the financial implications for your family, particularly if you or a partner are likely to have to stop working or see a significant drop in earnings. Our family finances adviser [answers some of your most common questions about benefits](#) that as a parent with a disabled child you might have.

There have already been a number of changes to the benefits system in response to the current outbreak. It is likely that further changes will be announced in the near future so [this webpage](#) will be updated regularly.

### **What does the emergency Coronavirus bill mean for disabled children?**

We've taken a look at the emergency Coronavirus Bill published yesterday (19th March 2020) by the government and made [an initial assessment for families with disabled children](#). The aim of the Bill is to help the government deal with the current coronavirus pandemic. It's not law yet and still needs to pass through Parliament - so there will be a very short opportunity to influence it, which Contact and our partners will try to do.

### **Our Fledglings shop remains open**

[Our Fledglings online shop](#) is still open - we hope we can meet any demands our families have for goods such as continence products and dishwasher-safe toys.

### **COVID-19 and families with disabled children – resources to help**

We know that families caring for disabled children may be particularly worried about the COVID-19 coronavirus. You might find it helpful to [read these two resources](#) from WellChild and Carers UK.

If you haven't already, subscribe to [our other email newsletters](#) so you are kept up-to-date with all the latest disability news, updates about Contact's work and activities, and opportunities for you to get involved in what we do.

And don't forget, the [Contact website](#) provides advice and information about any concern you might have about raising a child with additional needs or a disability. We have: A [Common Questions Tool](#) to help you find what you're looking for quickly and easily; a [benefits calculator](#) and [grants finder](#); a [Live Chat](#) service so you can ask us about your rights to services and support; and an [online shop](#) full of practical products for your child and family.

If you can't find what you need on our website you can call Contact's free helpline on 0808 808 3555 between 9.30am-5pm Monday to Friday or email [helpline@contact.org.uk](mailto:helpline@contact.org.uk).

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