



**Improving local services for children and young people
with special educational needs and/or disabilities**

There's nothing that can't be done if we raise our voice as one

Parent Carer Council (WPCC) working with strategic partners to improve services, information and support for families with disabled children during the Covid19 pandemic

Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC) responded to reports of parent carers experiencing anxiety, stress and pressure over the amount of work their children were being given by some schools while learning at home. The forum had conversations with the local authority who in turn sent out a communication written by the forum to all schools, supporting the forum's message that parent carers' priority should be to manage their children's needs, anxieties and wellbeing.

The forum's message recommended that a routine is important and that activities that supported a child's mental wellbeing may be more important than expecting completion of all home learning activities. The WPCC have provided online forums and virtual coffee mornings for parent carers to share tips and support each other, and have described participating in activities around the home as a way of developing independent living skills for example.

The forum have set up a dedicated Coronavirus section on their website which is updated almost daily and includes: information on changes to services, changes to events and activities etc., learning resources and activities, and links to archived copies of their weekly COVID newsletters which they are producing in addition to their normal weekly newsletters. The WPCC team is working hard to make sure information and supported is reaching families who are most vulnerable by posting hard copies to those who request it, and maintaining telephone contact with them at least weekly if not more frequently.

The WPCC has remained open throughout the pandemic enabling parent carers to communicate with the forum by telephone and email as normal. Working in partnership with the housing team within the LA, the forum has been successful in helping some families to resolve issues with housing. The forum is particularly proud to have worked with a local IT company and secured the donation of 5 devices which they delivered to families who were particularly struggling to support their children's home education due to no access to technology.

Prior to 1st June, the forum survey parent carers to ask how they felt about their children returning back to school is details of easements were published. The results of the forum's survey was shared with the LA which informed some of the contents of the LA's '*COVID-19: returning to school advice for parents*' publication. The WPCC is about to publish its Summer Bulletin which will be a booklet available free to any Wiltshire parent carer who requests it, detailing online resources, activities, support, games, online groups, social stories and more, to help support families over what is likely to be a very challenging summer.