



Short Breaks guidance for parents and carers relating to COVID-19

Government guidance is very clear that children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities should stay at home with their families during the current period, where it is safer for them to do so.

For some children with Education, Health and Care plans (EHCPs), parents and schools will decide that the child or young person's needs can be met best if they continue to attend school. The Local Authority is working with schools, early years settings and colleges to make sure that all children and young people who need to attend, are able to attend. Children who may need to attend school include those who have EHCPs, other vulnerabilities, and those whose parents are key workers,

Government guidance recommends that households stay at home for most of the day except for a maximum hour a day exercising or shopping. It also recommends social distancing - keeping a distance of 2 meters from people who are not part of the household. This means that families should not be having visitors who are not part of their household.

A very small number of families have children with significant support needs that are usually met through a short breaks provider coming into the home. This might be to help the parent by providing sitting services or personal care for the child/young person. Other families may receive support from a provider to take the child/young person out of the home to access community activities.

During this unprecedented time, the local authority is advising parents/carers to consider whether it is absolutely necessary to their own and their child's needs to have a short breaks provider visiting their home.

If this is necessary to keep the child safe and to prevent carer burnout, the Well Child charity has produced some useful advice on how to manage carers coming to the home:

<https://www.wellchild.org.uk/2020/03/18/seven-rules-for-managing-carers-in-the-home/>

The charity also has some advice on keeping children with complex needs safe at this time:

<https://www.wellchild.org.uk/2020/03/18/ten-ways-to-keep-my-child-with-complex-health-needs-safe/>

If it is essential for a child's wellbeing that they continue to be taken out of the home by a befriending service provider, both the child and provider should follow government guidance on handwashing and social distancing. The provider should ensure the child/young person is only out of the house for the one hour a day permitted and is kept away from crowded areas to allow for social distancing. The worker should avoid taking the child on public transport.

If any member of the household or the service provider suspects they have the virus, they should immediately self-isolate and follow all government health guidance.

The local authority is working with short breaks providers to make sure they can stay in business and continue to provide their usual short breaks services to families once the Coronavirus emergency is over.

Overnight short breaks

The vast majority of disabled children are safest staying within their own household. Children and young people who receive a residential overnight short break can continue to do so only if the parent/social worker and provider agree that the child/young person will be safer continuing to receive this than being looked after full time at home.

Frequently Asked Questions.

Can we still have the targeted direct payment for a befriender during these times?

In the current circumstances we can't agree to you using your direct payment for a befriender unless there are exceptional reasons, however we will support you to look at other ways this payment could be used. You could bank your hours and use them later in the year to pay for a befriender, or you could use your money to buy equipment for your child to use at home to keep them occupied or help them get some exercise, while you get a break.

Ideas for using your direct payment: what about a television subscription, equipment such as games, sensory toys, I pads, 3D Virtual stuff, big tent for the garden / indoors, cookery equipment, indoor mini gym equipment. These are just some ideas, if you are not sure what you can spend your money on, contact the Specialist Resource team 0161 219 2125 or your social worker.

My child has a specialist short break payment can we still have this payment as my Personal Assistant says she is happy to carry on?

If the only way your child's needs can be met is through help from a Personal Assistant, yes, as long as you are following Public health England guidance:

<https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/01/23/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-what-you-need-to-know/https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

Sessions may need to take place in the home. Also, look at the guidance from Well Child charity: <https://www.wellchild.org.uk/2020/03/18/seven-rules-for-managing-carers-in-the-home/>

If my Personal Assistant is not happy to continue can I still pay them?

If you employ your own Personal Assistant, you could ask them if they are willing to bank the hours they normally provide for use later in the year. You could pay your PA for the next month while you both review the situation. The PA may be entitled to government support while they

are not able to provide short breaks services to families:

<https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/info/500361/coronavirus/7928/coronavirus/2>

The local authority is working with agencies that provide personal assistance and befriending services for families, to make sure they are able to continue offering services once the Coronavirus situation is over

Will my short break service still continue?

This will depend on the service you are receiving. If your service provider is not able to operate at this current time we may consider a direct payment if appropriate to your family's needs. For instance, if you normally receive a befriending service to take your child to the gym, we could look at providing a direct payment for play or exercise equipment that your child can use at home.

Alternatively, you could bank the hours you usually receive from the short breaks service and have them once life is back to normal.

If the child/young person is accessing school would this count as a short break offer rather than banking hours?

The local authority will be able offer a payment rather than a service or you could bank the hours until the current restrictions are lifted.

Many schools will be able to offer some support to children of key workers and vulnerable children, including disabled children over school holidays, so check with your child's school as this may provide the break you need currently.

Can I use my direct payment to pay a member of my family?

The government guidance on minimising contact with people outside your household also applies to family members. It is especially important for older people, such as grandparents who are over 70 or who have underlying health conditions to stay and home.

You could use your direct payment to buy play equipment which other members of the family who live in your household could use with your disabled child.

What about playschemes? If they are not running will there be an alternative?

Schools can continue to offer support to vulnerable children and children of key workers over school holidays. Speak to your school about what is available.

For most children who would usually attend a play scheme, but would be safer in the current situation staying at home, we will consider the use of direct payments as an alternative so families can buy appropriate play equipment.

I have overnight short breaks will these still continue?

The vast majority of children with significant health needs will be safer staying at home. If you feel you need to continue with overnight short breaks, speak to your social worker and the overnight provider.

What help will I get through this time?

- Regular updates / resources through the Local Offer and newsletter.
<https://hsm.manchester.gov.uk/kb5/manchester/directory/advice.page?id=F3WITVb4jZ0>
- Good information about where to get help, for example food banks, other financial support
<https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/info/500361/coronavirus>
- Connection with other parents through the Manchester Parent Carer Forum and the Parent Champions Facebook Page sharing loads of good stuff:
<https://hsm.manchester.gov.uk/kb5/manchester/directory/localoffer.page?localofferchannel=1-7-25&agefilters=4>
- Virtual Drop Ins – dates advertised on Manchester Local Offer – www.manchester.gov.uk/sendlocaloffer
- Extended hours on the IAS Helpline:
<https://hsm.manchester.gov.uk/kb5/manchester/directory/advice.page?id=hJA-GcVIZIU> or email: parents@manchester.gov.uk
- Much greater flexibility about how you can use your direct payment

- One Education Educational Psychologists can help parents/carers talk to their children about Coronavirus. Help line open 9 - 12, Monday to Friday: 0161 276 0115

My child is bored at home. How can I keep them occupied?

All schools are sending out resources to pupils who are at home and putting resources on their websites. Manchester special schools are also sharing resources on their websites that are suitable for primary and secondary pupils with special educational needs. These include fun things you can do with your child, not just lessons. There are links to Manchester's schools on the Local Offer website.

<https://hsm.manchester.gov.uk/kb5/manchester/directory/localoffer.page?localofferchannel=0>

Schools are also contacting all pupils who are at home at least weekly.

Encourage your child to keep in touch with their friends and relatives through phone calls or social media following the national on-line safety advice.

Other parents will also have great ideas to share about what activities they have tried - see the Local Offer for links:

<https://hsm.manchester.gov.uk/kb5/manchester/directory/advice.page?id=F3WITVb4jZ0>

I was due for a short breaks review - how will this now happen so I can continue to get short breaks support?

Your social worker or specialist resource team worker will contact you to arrange for your support to continue if you still need it until they can arrange for a proper review. They may need to change the type of support you receive - for example, you may be given a direct payment, so you can buy play equipment.

I am on the waiting list to have my assessment for a short break - will this still be going ahead?

A member of staff from the Specialist Resource Team will contact you by phone or email to do a short breaks assessment. At the current time the

only short break we can offer is a direct payment for play or ICT equipment to keep your son or daughter occupied at home. We will support you to find a way of using a direct payment that best meets your family's needs. Once services are operating normally again if you would like to change to a service you can request a review of your short breaks by contacting the Specialist Resource Team 0161 219 2125 or your social worker.