

20th January 2021

Dear Parent Carer Member,

Covid-19 and the latest lockdown 3 measures

As we all know, the current situation is developing rapidly. In Calderdale, we were successful in lowering the rate of infection from where it was in the summer, which means at present, we have lower numbers of cases than other parts of the country, however, we know that this can change very quickly. The Public Health message is that we should do all that we can locally to stop the spread of the pandemic.

Calderdale Council has recently issued some guidance for parents of children and young people at the three Special Schools (Highbury, Woodbank and both Ravenscliffe sites).

This is in response to government guidance for special schools during the lockdown, which stresses the importance of face to face learning, but also the need to ensure both pupils and staff are safe. Schools will continue to carry out risk assessments and review their arrangements in light of any changes.

Separately, guidance for parents of children and young people with SEND in mainstream schools has also been issued. This includes both those on SEND Support and those with EHC Plans.

If your child needs to access a school place, and is not currently able to, schools and the Local Authority can work with you to identify what alternative options may be available. Please contact your head teacher or ben.allchin@calderdale.gov.uk.

There is a raft of support measures for those pupils who are learning at home and we would encourage parent carers of students at the three special schools to communicate with their head teachers to talk through any issues that you have. The Special Needs Team can also be contacted as well as the therapy services you access with your child.

We can say with confidence that Calderdale is working really hard to make sure that our children have as much priority as possible in accessing services, including school.

We have put together some further information which we think you will find useful during this time:

Key Local Contacts:

- Special Educational Need (SEN) Team: SEN.Team@calderdale.gov.uk Telephone 01422 394 141
- Social Care (Disabled Children's Team and Multi Agency Screening Team): mastadmin@calderdale.gov.uk Telephone 01422 393 336.
- Children's Therapy Services: childrenstherapy2@cht.nhs.uk Telephone 01422 261 340
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing: Calderdale First Point of Contact (FPOC): Telephone 01422 300 001
- **Details of all services for children with additional needs or disabilities are available on [Calderdale's Local Offer website](#).**

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1. Access to online learning (Equipment and Data).

Schools have been provided with extra equipment to loan to parents and we would encourage Parent Carers to make this request where needed. Please contact your local school head teacher if you wish to borrow a device.

Family Fund have had extra money provided to them so they can provide extra support during the pandemic. Their application window has been reduced from every 12 months to 9 months. Parents can apply for anything from laptops to sensory equipment.

www.familyfund.org.uk

Cloverleaf have a new local project which aims to get people with a learning disability online, reduce isolation and give people access to activities and groups online through a "Tablet Lending Library". All tablets are free to borrow and come with set up, advice and support. If you know someone with a learning disability who would benefit from this project please get in touch with Cloverleaf - please [click here](#) for more information.

All major broadband companies have removed data caps on their broadband packages. So, parents can be confident their children can access online learning without restrictions on how much data they use and without any increase in their broadband costs.

Some broadband providers offer special tariffs for certain customers, such as those on low incomes. Contact your provider to see if a special tariff is available and if you are eligible.

A small proportion of UK households do not have a broadband connection and are reliant on mobile connections to get online. To help keep these people connected, a number of mobile companies have increased data allowances on their tariffs for free, including those taking part in a UK Government initiative to help disadvantaged children without access to a laptop. You can find out more at <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/features-and-news/children-connected-home-learning-lockdown>

2. Resources to support emergency planning

[Thinking Ahead: a planning guide or families from Together Matters](#)

[Calderdale's hospital passport](#) - to prepare important information about your child to give to hospital staff

[NHS Grab and Go Guide](#) - for people with a learning disability or who are autistic. Information that hospital staff will need if admitted with COVID-19 (plus a [guide to completing the form](#))

3. For help with stress, worry and uncertainty, have a look at this leaflet from the Open Minds Partnership

<http://www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Is-your-child-feeling-stressed-worried-or-uncertain.pdf>

4. Information about vaccination priority groups

This [government guidance](#) sets out who is included in the 9 different priority groups.

- Group 4 includes those who are clinically extremely vulnerable or shielding.
- Group 6 covers those with underlying health conditions and includes Downs Syndrome and severe and profound learning disability.
- Group 6 also includes unpaid family carers. To be offered a vaccination in this priority group you must be registered with your GP as a family carer.
- If you employ personal assistants using direct payments, they can also register with their GP to be included in the priority group with social care staff
- Where there are PA's the employer can request vaccinations by providing name, d.o.b, NHS number, post code and house number to covidvaccination@calderdale.gov.uk. The team will then book them an appointment.

5. For SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) resources & family activities from BBC

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zh9v382>

6. And for something a bit different for those interested in the sea and nature, have a look at this newsletter from an Irish island: - <https://www.naturesweb.ie/>

7. Resources for building resilience

The Charity, Contact offer 1-1 telephone appointments with a family support adviser for parent carers looking for a listening ear, reassurance and practical and emotional support. Making an appointment is simple: Visit their Eventbrite page , choose the day (morning, afternoon or evening), and when you register choose the time slot you want.

www.contact.org.uk/advice-and-support/our-helpline

For other great resources on building resilience, have a look at the following: -

<https://www.boingboing.org.uk/resilience/resilient-therapy-resilience-framework/>

This is the framework used on the 'Insiders' Guide' courses put on by Unique Ways which will resume as soon as possible.

8. General useful information

- [information about Covid-19 from the charity Contact](#) - Includes government guidance updates plus information on family finances, family emotional well-being and resources to help your child understand the pandemic.
- [Information about Covid-19 from the Challenging Behaviour Foundation](#) - Includes resources on supporting your child at home, easy read information, and templates for exemptions and emergency planning.

The message that we would want to give you about home learning is that the place to start is to enjoy the time with your children as much as possible and to do fun things as much as possible. That means it's ok to join them playing games if it means you're doing something together. Especially if the alternative is an argument!

Recently one of our parent carer members posted some photos on social media of her children undertaking some home-baking.

They photos were lovely and clearly showed her children having a great time. Afterwards she decided to follow up with this below. We have permission to circulate, the aim of this being two-fold: -

- goodness knows we all need to laugh just now and
- be truly aware of the situation most of our members find themselves in – this is hard and you should not be made to feel that you are failing your children or yourself by anyone – sometimes even other parents.

For all the parents and carers out there doing their best to make it work

They say a picture can tell a thousand words and yes it can but a photograph can also mislead. These photos are beautiful and of course I love making memories with my boys but I don't want anyone thinking it's all fairy cakes and butterflies! Today has been hard we've had tears and tantrums, I've missed zoom meetings because I've lost track of time, I've missed their zoom lessons because of technical errors, the house looks like it's been ransacked, I've not yet eaten (unless you count cake mixture or buttercream) and I've needed a wee for about 3 hours! I've just settled them down for lunch which is of course late but I wanted to post this (as let's face it, I won't get chance for the next 24 hrs).

*Just to say that we're all muddling along in this and all the disasters of the day don't make me or you a bad parent they make us human, so I'm not going to beat myself up over things not being perfect instead I'm going to be proud that I've stepped up and tried my best! Remember even those parents you think are superhuman with all their s*** together and who appear to be running a one-person academy have probably not eaten yet today or had a wee either as they're also human!*

We're all in this together so be proud..... you're doing great. ❤️

We at Unique Ways and Family Voice Calderdale are here for you as we have been right through the pandemic. Our office is obviously closed, but the team are working from home and a virtual service is still being offered where possible. As always, we are open Monday – Friday during term time from 9.00 – 3.00. 01422 343 090 or hi@uniqueways.org.uk

Finally, please remember you are doing a good job. Take care of yourselves, we are thinking of you at this time.

Yours sincerely



Shona Walsh
Chief Executive Officer – Unique Ways

P. Ruse

Pete Ruse
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