

In this issue:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 March 2020 – an extraordinary month 2 Ofsted/CQC local area SEND inspection 3 Ofsted consultation – deadline 30 April 2020 3 Family Voice Facebook page 4 Family Voice 10th Anniversary Conference 8 NHS COVID-19 message for parents 9 Free parking for health workers and volunteers 9 Coronavirus: information for families with disabled children 9 Social story about coronavirus 11 Early Childhood and Family Service 11 A message for families caring for seriously ill children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11 Family Voice AGM – postponed 12 Temporary changes to EHC plans 12 The Covibook 13 NHS essential services 14 Open letter from Vicky Ford MP 15 Short Breaks team update 17 Local Offer Family Roadshow – date changes 18 Email your questions on coronavirus and SEND 18 COVID-19 update – Tribunal panels 19 Wellbeing 19 Community Support – during the pandemic 20 SEND eNewsletter 20 Contacting Family Voice Norfolk |
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March 2020 – an extraordinary month

Two major events for Family Voice last month have, of course, been eclipsed by a third.

Many of you took part in the first event: **the local area SEND inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).**

You also helped to make our **10th Anniversary Family Voice Conference** a very special occasion.

And all of us have had our lives changed by the arrival of the **COVID-19 virus** and the measures that have been taken to reduce the danger it presents.

It will be no surprise that most of this newsletter will report on the challenges and opportunities presented by all three events. They have joined us and divided us in so many ways. Two themes run through everything: the need for all of us to work together and the importance of excellent communication to ensure that we can do what is best for ourselves, our families and everyone around us.

In these strange and difficult days, Family Voice is continuing to work to ensure that the voices of families are heard – not face-to-face, of course, but by any other means we can. As well as reports on the Ofsted/CQC inspection and our Conference, we are sharing information about the current situation and sources of support, so that we are all as equipped as possible to care for those we love and keep them safe.



Ofsted/CQC local area SEND inspection

Between 2 and 6 March, Ofsted/CQC inspectors looked at the provision in Norfolk for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They had announced their arrival on the previous Monday. Throughout the inspection, it was clear that the views of parent carers were considered important.

As the Parent Carer Forum for Norfolk, Family Voice sent representatives to a number of meetings that included the inspectors and professionals from education, health and social care services. Groups supporting parents, such as SENSational Families, SEN Partnership and SENDIASS also took part in some of these.

At a meeting at the Norwich Professional Development Centre (PDC) on 3 March, parents were invited to give their views directly to the inspectors and many took the opportunity to do so. Their testimonies were heartfelt and moving.

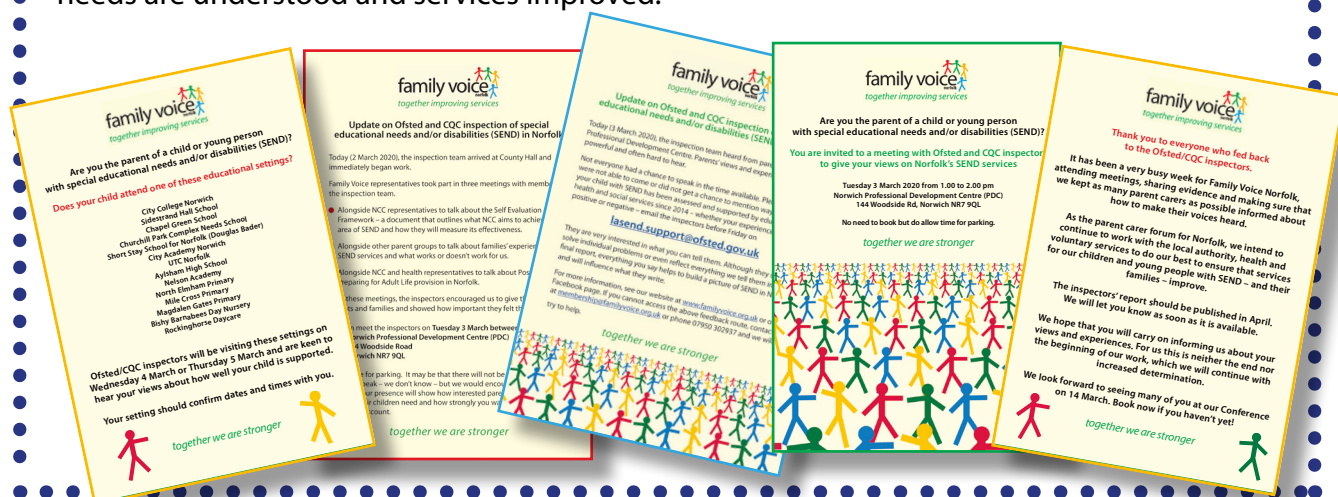
Throughout the week, Family Voice aimed to give feedback to families about what was happening and how they could contribute. We reached out by email and on our website. Our Facebook posts reached record numbers of shares.

Of course, we also shared with the inspectors the reports that we have produced in recent years from our surveys and events, giving your views on a wide range of topics, such as EHCPs and SEN Support, transport, speech and language therapy (SaLT) and Short Breaks. All of these can be viewed on our website at www.familyvoice.org.uk.

As always, information we shared from surveys or events was fully anonymised. We would never pass on comments that could identify you or your family to professionals or providers, unless that was something you specifically gave us permission to do. We remove any names and, on particularly sensitive matters, will ensure that the gender of the child, numbers of siblings etc. or the area of the county, if this is not relevant to the matter in hand, are changed or removed.

The inspectors' findings will be published, usually within 33 days of the end of the inspection. We will let you know when this happens, but you can also check on the Ofsted website at www.reports.ofsted.gov.uk. Under 'Category' click on 'Other organisations', then 'Local area SEND'.

Whatever the outcome, our focus will be on working in partnership with you our members, with decision-makers and planners, and with voluntary groups to ensure that families' needs are understood and services improved.



Ofsted consultation on proposals for revisions to post-inspection arrangements

Ofsted is consulting on its proposals for revisions to post-inspection arrangements, including how complaints about its work are handled. The aim is to improve current arrangements to deal with any queries or concerns about an inspection quickly and before an inspection report is finalised.

The proposals are:

- to provide greater consistency in post-inspection arrangements
- to allow all inspected providers five working days to review their draft report and submit any comments about issues of factual accuracy and the inspection process for Ofsted to consider before it finalises the report
- to consider and respond to formal complaints from inspected providers before their inspection report is published, if these complaints are submitted promptly
- to retain current arrangements for internal reviews into complaints handling, including the scrutiny panel.

Ofsted is seeking the widest possible range of views to ensure that revised procedures are closely matched to the needs of inspected providers and those making complaints.

The consultation document and other supporting materials are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-ofsteds-post-inspection-processes-and-complaints-handling-proposed-improvements>.

The closing date for this consultation is **30 April 2020**.

You can make your views known via a smart survey here: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/PostInspectionChanges/>

If you have any difficulties using the smart survey, please email PI2020consultation@ofsted.gov.uk with the details and you will be offered an alternative that meets your needs.

Have you discovered our Facebook page?

When events are moving as quickly as they have been recently, the Family Voice Facebook page has been increasingly essential to the way that we work.

Please note that our page is for information and it is public, not a closed group. It's not intended as a forum for discussion or complaints. However, our Facebook manager Lisa is very happy to promote events and activities that you have found useful and forums where you *can* link with other families. You don't have to be a member of Family Voice to use it either – though of course we would love you to join up.

Lisa regularly posts a mass of information about what is happening in Norfolk, organisations that can help you and your family, relevant communications from the local authority, health services and voluntary sector, news about Family Voice and much more. See [FamilyVoiceNorfolk](https://www.facebook.com/FamilyVoiceNorfolk)



Family Voice 10th Anniversary Conference 14 March 2020

It seems incredible now that only three weeks ago we were taking the decision to go ahead with our Conference. At the time, the government had not yet advised against large gatherings and there were no reported cases of COVID-19 in Norfolk. We took the decision to continue with as many precautions as possible, while recognising and honouring the fact that some families and providers would feel that this was too big a risk to take in their individual circumstances.

In the event, very many of you decided to come and most standholders and professionals took the same decision. Professionals from the local authority and health services continued with the stands, 'speed dating' and workshops they had undertaken to hold.

So despite the difficulties, this was our busiest Conference to date. Around 400 people attended, with over 250 parent carers and children and around 150 professionals. This year we were also delighted to welcome many young people and children with SEND, who reminded us of the whole reason we are all engaged in working to improve services.

We took the precautions that were then being advised, of course. Lewis, the son of our chair, would not allow anyone to enter the Conference Centre without using the hand sanitiser. Elbow bumps, which replaced the traditional handshake, were everywhere to be seen and it is a mark of how quickly things have changed that these now seem positively intimate.



Our usual keynote speech was replaced by an opening ceremony. Our chair, Tracey Sismey, took the opportunity to clarify Family Voice's role as a Parent Carer Forum and to introduce the theme of our Conference: by working together we can all achieve so much more for the families we care about.



This was highlighted by the fact that Tracey's talk was opened and closed by some of those young people. Dancers from the D4Dance Group from The Garage in Norwich performed some of the pieces they have been preparing on the theme of 'The Future'. They showed a future in which they were free to act independently but where support from their peers and others was quick to appear when needed. After Tracey's speech, Total Ensemble Theatre Company performed 'Embrace', a piece they developed for the enthronement of the new Bishop of Norwich. On their feedback forms, parents commented: "I thought that this year's conference opening ceremony was lovely. The performers were a credit to the groups." "Drama and dance performances were amazing." "Really enjoyed the performances during the opening ceremony – a wonderful thing to include!"





One of the aims of the Family Voice Conference is to offer as much information about SEND services as we possibly can and provide a variety of ways for parent carers to access that information, through workshops, stands or speaking to professionals on an individual basis. This year, based on feedback from parent carers last year, we ran an extra set of workshops through the lunchtime period, which gave us 11 workshops and over 270 spaces for parent carers to attend. Around 80% of parent carers attended at least one workshop, with a few parents accessing three.

The morning workshops included a **Q&A session on education, health, social care and local policing** in the auditorium with senior representatives of education, health and social care services and local policing, including Sara Tough, Executive Director of Children's Services. Parent carers found this a "great opportunity to have such a wide and honest panel" and to meet with other parent carers in similar situations.

Another popular morning workshop was **Supporting children at SEN Support in mainstream schools**, where there was standing room only. The workshop gave parent carers the opportunity to find out about the 'Provision Expected at SEN Support' (PEASS) document and how this could help them to have informed discussions with teaching staff at their child's school.

The **Direct Payment Support Service** team offered information and advice about how to access their service, while the **KIDS Mediation** workshop outlined the mediation process available to parent carers.

There were three lunchtime workshops. The **Positive experiences of hospital encounters** had to be modified slightly, as one of the presenters was unable to be present, but parents found it very informative. **Keeping it in the family**, presented by Jamie Walker from The WillMaker Group, gave a "very useful and interesting" presentation on why it is so important to make a will, especially if your children are vulnerable or in receipt of benefits. **Total Ensemble** gave a hands-on workshop, where young people could explore ways to express themselves and communicate through physical theatre.



The afternoon workshops included a presentation on **Preparing for Adult Life**, the new service for young people with SEND aged 14–25, in which parent carers were keenly interested. **Supporting your child to develop their communication skills** was reported by parent carers to be "very informative". There was also a "brilliant" workshop on **Reviewing an Education, Health and Care Plan** by Amy Pease of SENDIASS, where parents very much appreciated having "plenty of time for questions".

The workshop on **Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)** drew much interest from parent carers. This was an initial discussion around a subject about which Norfolk has as yet no clear or joined-up position statement. Professionals from CAMHS and Starfish Plus joined educational psychologists to talk with parent carers in true co-production, sharing knowledge and experiences. As a couple of parent carers put it, it was "demonstrating exactly the role of Family Voice" and showed "how by working together, changes can be made".





Family Voice works with many different service providers within the local authority, health services and voluntary organisations. This year, we celebrated this with a huge artwork that we called **The Big Picture**, which was based on the theme that by working together we can all achieve so much more for the families that we care about. A special thank you to our talented Administration Assistant, Emma Parncutt, for producing this amazing artwork.



We would also like to take the opportunity to thank the Norwich branch of the National Autistic Society for providing the Lego Club and a treasure hunt for children. The Lego Club was a fabulous opportunity for parent carers and their children to take some time out from the busy Conference and play in the relative quietness of the Conference Centre gallery.

In addition to the Lego Club, our own Membership Secretary, Kate Draycott, provided several amazing Family Voice Norfolk rocks for children and young people to find around the Conference Centre. Thank you, Kate!



This year we saw around 60 parent carers participate in the ever-popular speed-dating sessions with 16 professionals, who offered their time to talk one-to-one with parent carers. One parent said that the most useful part of the day was "the opportunity to speak directly with people ... so many people are accessible and having face-to-face conversations is invaluable." While another parent carer said, "I attended a speed-dating session with a health professional who was lovely and very approachable."

The stands are an incredibly important part of our Conference and each year we aim to include as many new organisations as we can to increase variety and interest for parent carers. Around 40 standholders offered a wealth of information, advice and support. Parent carers said that it was useful "talking to those on the stands that have a good knowledge of SEN children". Many standholders reported that they really valued the opportunity to meet and talk to parent carers and to share information about their services.





The Family Voice Facebook page now promotes hundreds of activities and sources of information and support for families with children with SEND every year. We decided to provide a stand at the Conference on which organisations that were unable to attend on the day could display leaflets and contact details. The stand was crammed with materials from flyers to sunflower lanyards.

Each year, the Family Voice Norfolk ambassador team runs its own stand, where parent carers are able to find out more about the work of Family Voice and sign up as a member or discover what it means to join the team. The Conference is open to all parent carers with children and young people with SEND. This year about 35% of attendees were not already members of Family Voice, with around half of this number wanting to sign up. Kate, our Membership Secretary, will be in contact with those new members so that their experiences can be reflected in the work we do with decision-makers and service providers.



It is always lovely to see the familiar friendly faces of parent carers and professionals who have attended many of our Conferences and continue to benefit from the day. However, over half the parent carers who attended were doing so for the first time, which shows how important it is for us to continue to promote this event with the help of educational settings and support groups. One parent said that the Conference was "very helpful and informative. Wish I had found it years ago."

Many of the workshop presentations can be found on the Family Voice website (<https://www.familyvoice.org.uk/articles-reports/conferences/>) and a fuller version of this report will be available on our website shortly. If you would like a hard copy of the report, our chair's speech, or any of the presentations, please email office@familyvoice.org.uk or write to us at Family Voice Norfolk, PO Box 1290, Long Stratton, Norwich, NR15 2HD.

Family Voice Norfolk would like to thank everyone who attended for making it such an amazing and successful day, and I would personally like to take this opportunity to thank the whole Family Voice team. I am very fortunate to work with some amazingly dedicated representatives, ambassadors and administration staff. Without them, an event such as this would not be possible.

Bernadette Pallister
Administration Manager



FOR PARENTS

A SPECIAL COVID MESSAGE

When your child is ill or injured it is very difficult to decide if/when to call your child's GP, NHS 111 or go the Accident and Emergency Department (A&E). During the current situation and while the government is asking everyone to stay at home, it can be confusing to know what to do. Here is some guidance:



FOR ADVICE ON COVID-19 AND
CHILDHOOD ILLNESSES/INJURIES
VISIT WWW.NHS.UK

Designed by primary and
secondary care clinicians from
Barts Health & North-East
London STP

YOU SHOULD GO TO A&E AND/OR CALL 999 IMMEDIATELY IF

APPEARANCE

- ▶ Pale/mottled/ashen/blue colour
- ▶ Collapsed/unresponsive/loss of consciousness
- ▶ No obvious pulse or heartbeat
- ▶ Severe allergic reaction

BEHAVIOUR

- ▶ Extreme irritability/pain/sleepiness (can be woken but falls asleep immediately)
- ▶ Seizure/jerking movements/fit

BREATHING

- ▶ Sucking in and out between ribs
- ▶ Flaring nostrils
- ▶ Extremely fast breathing
- ▶ Noisy breathing

OTHER

- ▶ Bleeding from an injury, that doesn't stop after 10 minutes of pressure

YOU SHOULD GO TO A&E IF

APPEARANCE

- ▶ Dizziness/feeling faint
- ▶ Rash that does not fade when you press it

BEHAVIOUR

- ▶ Severe constant tummy pain

OTHER

- ▶ Burn
- ▶ Possible broken bone

OTHER

- ▶ Swallowed foreign objects (especially magnets/batteries)
- ▶ Temperature higher than 38°C in a baby younger than three months old
- ▶ Your child has special health care needs and you have a plan that tells you to go to A&E
- ▶ Feels abnormally cold to touch
- ▶ Expressing suicidal/significant selfharm thoughts

YOU SHOULD CALL YOUR GP IF

APPEARANCE

- ▶ Mild/mod allergic reaction (known or suspected)
- ▶ New rash that fades when you press on it

BEHAVIOUR

- ▶ Mild irritability/sleepier than normal
- ▶ Severe tummy pain that comes and goes
- ▶ Vomiting and diarrhoea
- ▶ Not passed urine for more than 12 hours

BREATHING

- ▶ Wheezing/fast breathing

OTHER

- ▶ Temperature >39°C (age 3-12 months)
- ▶ Temperature over 38°C for more than 7 days
- ▶ Accidental overdose of medication or other substances
- ▶ Ear pain for more than 2 days
- ▶ Emotional distress, that can't be reassured

YOU SHOULD CHECK WITH 111 OR YOUR COMMUNITY PHARMACIST IF

APPEARANCE

- ▶ Pink eyes/red eyes

BEHAVIOUR

- ▶ Ear pain for less than 2 days
- ▶ Mild tummy pain that comes and goes

BREATHING

- ▶ Cough
- ▶ Runny nose

OTHER

- ▶ Temperature over 38°C for less than 7 days



Free parking for health workers and community volunteers



Simple parking permits are available for health workers and community volunteers who are helping people across Norfolk.

The new permits will allow free parking in all council-run car parks, in on-street pay-and-display bays, and permit parking and time-limited waiting bays. However, to ensure vital spaces will still remain available, and roads accessible for emergency services, the new rules will not apply to disabled parking bays, loading bays, car club spaces and double yellow lines.

Who is eligible for a permit?

Anyone who is a health or care worker or a volunteer formally working on behalf of the COVID-19 response providing services to the local community is eligible for a permit.

How do I get a permit?

For permits across Norfolk (except Norwich) visit the [MiPermit website](#).

For Norwich City controlled areas, senior members of organisations that qualify should email parkingrequests@norwich.gov.uk asking to be included in the scheme and the permit template will be emailed to them for display in vehicle windscreens.

Visit your local district, city or borough council website to find where council-run car parks are in your area.

Coronavirus: information for families with disabled children

Contact – the charity for families with disabled children – has collated useful advice on its website, including information about benefits. The information is regularly refreshed as the situation evolves.

Go to <https://www.contact.org.uk>

As usual, the website also includes a wealth of other useful information and links. It's well worth a look.



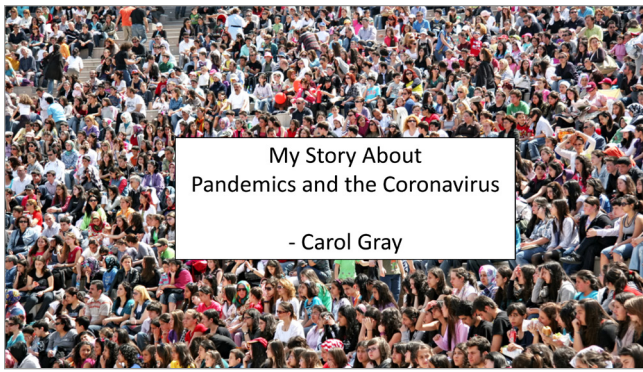
Social story

Overleaf is a social story about coronavirus developed by East Coast Community Healthcare Speech and Language Therapy to share with your child or young person if you think it would be helpful. It is reassuring about grown-ups doing the right thing and that the current situation is not for ever.



Our newsletter format is not ideal for this but the story reads from left to right.



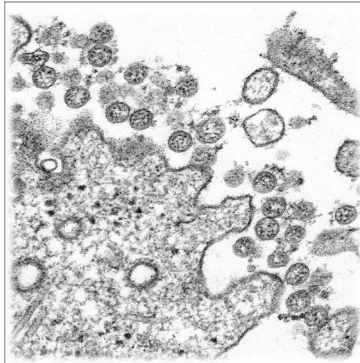


My Story About Pandemics and the Coronavirus

- Carol Gray



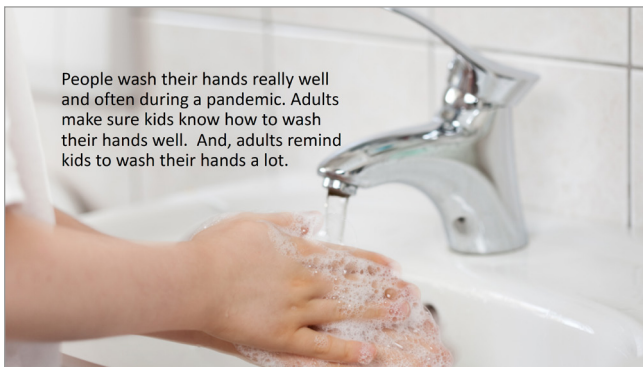
This story is about pandemics and the Coronavirus. A pandemic is when many people in a large area become sick. A pandemic is usually caused by a new virus.



The Coronavirus is a virus that is spreading fast and causing a worldwide pandemic now. Viruses are so small that it takes an electron microscope to see them. People can't see if a virus is near them.



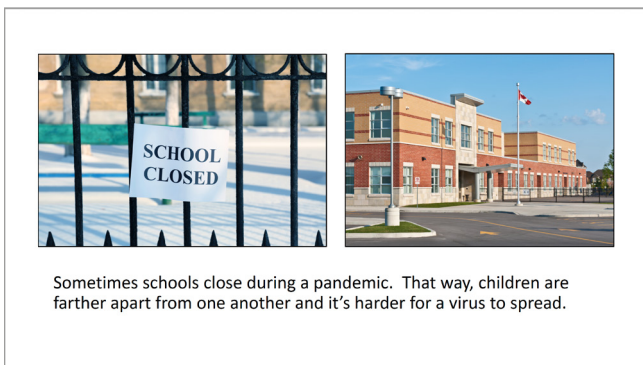
People are smart. Even though they can't see the Coronavirus, they know what to do. They use healthy habits and work together to make it harder for the Coronavirus to spread. This helps to keep people healthy during the pandemic.



People wash their hands really well and often during a pandemic. Adults make sure kids know how to wash their hands well. And, adults remind kids to wash their hands a lot.



The Coronavirus has been traveling fast from one person to another. If many people are close together in the same place, that makes it easier for a virus to spread. More people become sick faster.



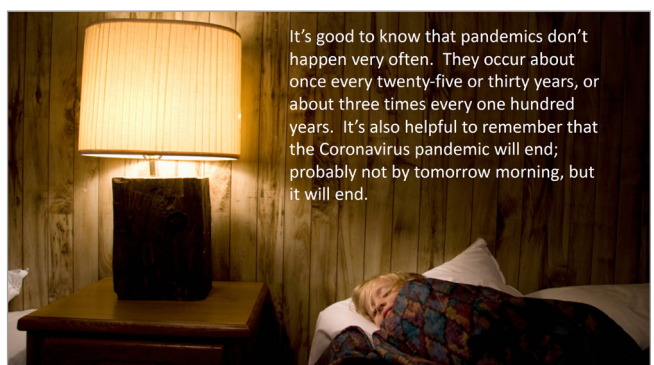
Sometimes schools close during a pandemic. That way, children are farther apart from one another and it's harder for a virus to spread.



A pandemic can cause people to reschedule their vacation plans. This is because vacations are often in fun and crowded places. People try to avoid crowds in a pandemic. They may re-schedule their trip.



My parents are learning more about the Coronavirus every day. They watch the news and look for information. They are watching out for me, too. If I have questions, they can help.



It's good to know that pandemics don't happen very often. They occur about once every twenty-five or thirty years, or about three times every one hundred years. It's also helpful to remember that the Coronavirus pandemic will end; probably not by tomorrow morning, but it will end.

Early Childhood and Family Service



**Early
Childhood
and Family
Service**

Just a reminder that the Early Childhood and Family Service is available for all families with 0–5-year-olds in Norfolk. If you are struggling with any aspect of parenting life – whether it's the mental effects of all the recent changes, you need some ideas for home-based activities, you are concerned about your child's development, or your family is having financial difficulties due to COVID-19 – please get in touch. You can:

- email ecfs-families@actionforchildren.org.uk
- Visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/earlychildhood and click 'request support'
- Make contact via Facebook – simply search for 'Early Childhood and Family Service' and like the service for your area
- Call 0344 800 8020 (Lines are quite busy so it may be best to try another method if you can.)

A message for families caring for seriously ill children



Together for Short Lives is urging families caring for vulnerable and seriously ill children not to delay seeking emergency medical care for their child due to fears around coronavirus and self-isolation.

Some worried families, whose children have had medical issues connected to their underlying condition, have delayed visiting A&E which has had serious consequences for their children. This has been because of concerns about COVID-19.

In the main, children with complex and life-limiting conditions won't die of COVID-19, but it would be a tragedy if they die because they do not receive help for treatable complications of their underlying condition.

Together for Short Lives is sending a clear message to families caring for very sick children: **trust your own judgement**, and if your child has worrying symptoms please seek medical care immediately rather than waiting for your child to become more seriously unwell.

Nobody knows your child better than you...

Worrying symptoms?

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

DON'T DELAY

Seek medical care **immediately**

Family Voice Norfolk Annual General Meeting

Normally at this time of year we would be announcing the date of our AGM and encouraging you to come along. Obviously, in the current extraordinary circumstances, this will have to be postponed. We look forward to a time when even being able to meet for an AGM will feel like a wonderful freedom. We'll keep you posted...



Temporary changes to Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans due to coronavirus

Norfolk County Council has made changes to how it manages Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, due to the coronavirus outbreak. These changes came into effect on Friday 20 March at 4pm. They will be reviewed on Friday May 1.

Norfolk County Council says: the changes are necessary, as pressures from school closures and staff shortages result in the need to prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable children in the education system. We thank you for your patience and understanding during these unprecedented times. We hope that the information below shows our determination to do our best to meet our duties in relation to EHC plans, in what are extraordinary circumstances.

[Do all children and young people with an EHC plan need to continue at school?](#)

[What happens where a child has an EHC plan and their school has closed?](#)

[What is the situation for children who attend a school outside of Norfolk and/or they board, and the school has closed?](#)

[Will children be able to attend their usual school?](#)

[What is happening with bespoke education or education other than at school arrangements?](#)

[What is happening around new request for EHC needs assessments?](#)

[Will current EHC needs assessments continue?](#)

[If a child is undergoing an EHC needs assessment, or going to tribunal, will they qualify as a vulnerable child and be able to go to school?](#)

[Existing EHC plans including Annual Reviews](#)

[Newcomers to Norfolk](#)

[What will we \(the local authority\) be expected to provide for children with EHC plans? Will my child's SEND provision continue?](#)

[Transition planning](#)

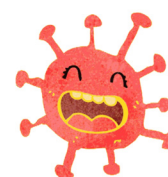
[Consultations and arrangements for identifying new schools and settings](#)

[Tribunals and mediation](#)

If you are affected by any of the changes outlined below, the links above will also lead you to a 'Contact us' button, with information about how to make your queries or issues known.

The Covibook

An illustrator and author, Manuela Molina has created *The Covibook* in multiple languages to help children under seven understand the situation and open a dialogue with family about their concerns. It can be found on the link below and is accessible in 20 languages. Use in a personal or professional capacity is granted on the page and you can download the book from here: <https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>



Our Essential Services

Due to the current situation with Coronavirus (COVID-19), we have had to make some changes to the way we work in the community. We want ensure that the families, children and young people that really need our support can still access help.

As of Monday 23 March 2020, we will only be providing services that all the NHS have agreed are essential for families. In Norfolk these are:

Just one Number

The Just One Number team can help you by providing health advice and information about your baby, child or young person. Just call **0300 300 0123** with any health questions or concerns you may have.

Mon – Fri 8am to 6pm (9am to 1pm on Sat)

0300 300 0123

JustOneNorfolk.nhs.uk

Our digital platform which provides all sorts of advice, information and support for you, your baby, child and young person. It has advice on how to manage during the current coronavirus pandemic as well as links through to other services.

All this information is free, clinically approved by the NHS and available 24/7.

Parentline

Text messaging advice service for Norfolk parents/carers of 0 - 19 year olds.

If you need advice about your child or young person's health or wellbeing, simply send a text and one of our team will text you back with advice.

07520 631590

Mon – Fri 8am to 6pm (9am to 1pm on Sat)

Antenatal Visit

A health visitor will arrange a phone call with you after you are 28 weeks pregnant.

They will ask you about your feelings about the pregnancy, your health, and your unborn baby's health. It is also a chance for you to ask any questions you may have or to discuss any concerns.



online Antenatal Programme

A digital antenatal programme for parents to be.

It helps you think about the development of your unborn baby and the first few weeks after birth. It includes how things may change and some of the practical skills to care for your baby.



Search for 'P2P' on JustOneNorfolk.nhs.uk

New Birth Visit

A Health Visitor will arrange to make a phone contact with you between 10 and 14 days after your baby has been born.

This is to find out how you are feeling and to discuss the health and wellbeing of your new baby and your family. The Health Visitor can support you with advice about caring for your baby, feeding, safe sleeping, crying, immunisations, and any other health issues.

Health Unlocked

HealthUnlocked.com/one-norfolk-parents

Our online parent support forum, where families can talk and support each other by sharing their individual experiences.



ChatHealth

Text messaging service for 11- 19 year olds.

From 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday ChatHealth has experienced clinicians online waiting to answer and deal with any messages from young people.

07480 635060

16 - 19 Health Passport

The Just1Norfolk Health Passport has been developed to support Norfolk 16-19 year olds make the transition into adulthood and to help young people become more independent with their own health needs. The app provides general health information and advice on a variety of topics!



All other services will pause until the NHS tells us we can start them again.

Norfolk Children and Young People's Services is provided by Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust and commissioned by Norfolk County Council



Open letter to children and young people with SEND, their parents, families and others who support them

Vicky Ford MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, has written an open letter and asked for it to be shared as widely as possible:

24 March 2020

Dear colleagues,

This is an open letter distributed through as many of our partner organisations as possible. I would be grateful if you could circulate it as widely as possible to children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), their parents/carers and families, and all others who support them.

This is an unprecedented, uncertain and testing time for all of us due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It is particularly challenging for children and young people with SEND, their families, and those who work tirelessly to support and care for them.

This is why, over the past week, we have made announcements and issued guidance about how we will meet the needs of children and young people with SEND during this challenging time. As the Minister responsible for SEND, I wanted to write to let you know that we are committed to doing everything possible to support you during this difficult time.

We are working in partnership with many organisations, including the National Network for Parent Carer Forums and the Council for Disabled Children, to make sure we are focusing our efforts in the right places. In all our decisions, the needs of SEND children and young people and their families and carers, and safeguarding these vulnerable groups, are at the forefront of our minds.

The Government published guidance about supporting vulnerable children on 22 March. It includes a number of frequently asked questions and is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>. We have also published new guidance that provides household isolation advice for children and young people who live in residential settings, and the staff that support them. This guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-isolation-for-residential-educational-settings>.

The guidance on supporting vulnerable children states that local authorities, nurseries, schools, special schools, colleges and other training providers should undertake a risk assessment to establish the individual needs of each child or young person with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. This assessment should incorporate the views of the child or young person and their parents. This will inform the decision about whether they should continue in school or college, or whether their needs can be met at home safely.

If needs are best met at schools or colleges, we will support their school or college to meet their needs, wherever possible. For those on SEN support, schools, colleges and local authorities have discretion to use the same risk judgement to decide whether home or school is the safest setting for these children. It is, however, important that as many children as possible remain at home during this time in order to help reduce transmission rates.

On 19 March, the Government introduced new legislation into Parliament, in the form of the Coronavirus Bill ('the Bill'), in response to the outbreak (<https://services.parliament.uk/bills/2019-21/coronavirus.html>).



Our overwhelming aim for SEND, through the Bill and the proposed changes to regulations that are to follow, is to balance the needs of this vulnerable group to receive the support they need with managing the demands on local authorities and health bodies to respond to this outbreak. As a result, we have included in the Bill temporary emergency powers to enable us, where necessary, to modify the legal requirements on local authorities in fulfilling their duties in relation to EHC plans.

In practice, this will mean that where a local authority is, because of the outbreak, unable, for example, to put in place stated provision, they will need to use their reasonable endeavours to do this, but won't be penalised for failing to meet the existing duty as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. These emergency powers will only be exercised for the shortest period and where necessary, and will be regularly reviewed. We will also be seeking to amend regulations on the timescales for EHC plan processes where this is appropriate because of COVID- 19. I want to reiterate that these decisions are not taken lightly but I believe strike the right balance in these difficult times.

I encourage you to keep up to date by regularly checking the gov.uk webpages, and raise awareness of the DfE Coronavirus helpline we have established for local authorities, providers and parents to get information on the latest Government advice. The number is 0800 046 8687, and lines are open 8am-6pm (Monday – Friday), and 10am – 4pm (Saturday and Sunday).

I realise that the impact of these extraordinary circumstances on this group of children and young people can be particularly acute. This is why I have asked the Council for Disabled Children, in partnership with Contact, to ensure that their websites and forums regularly update both families and services on information, which is available to support them. I have also asked them to collate any questions and queries from stakeholders so that we can maintain as many routes of contact as possible into Government to ensure our actions continue to be focused on prioritising where help is most needed.

The challenges we are now facing serve to further highlight the importance of ensuring the system of support for children and young people with SEND is as effective as possible in the future. Rest assured that completing our review of the SEND system remains a priority for me and for the Government. In light of the current situation, we will think carefully about the right way and timescale to do this. Right now my focus, like yours, is on managing the current situation and keeping vulnerable children safe and supported.

I know that by working together, we can ensure that children and young people with SEND receive the support they need during this difficult time.

Short Breaks Team update relating to COVID-19 (coronavirus)



The Short Breaks Team reports:

We are having to make some major changes to our services due to the impact of COVID-19. Our specialist Short Breaks providers and many Direct Payment carers (PAs) are not able to offer any services at present and most activities are closed. Where services and activities remain open in the short term, many families have told us that they do not want their child/ children to leave the house at this time.

Continued on page 16



Purchase of equipment/toys, etc.

Although we do not usually agree to the purchase of equipment, toys, etc., we feel that in the current circumstances we want to offer this to families where children are at home each day or who cannot access their usual Short Breaks. With immediate effect, for any family with a pre-paid debit card who still has funds in their Prepaid Financial Services (PFS) bank account, we are able to confirm that you can use the card to buy equipment such as outdoor play equipment, books, arts and craft materials, iPads, etc. to a maximum spend of £500 per child. Please note we cannot agree to the purchase of any subscription services such as Netflix, etc.

This money will be deducted from your Short Breaks funding as usual. Please either keep the receipts or preferably upload them to your PFS account.

If you do not already have a pre-paid card, please note that we are not able to issue new ones at this time. If you have a social worker, please contact them to see if they are able to help you instead. If you do not have a social worker, please speak to your child's school who may be able to help or signpost you to other ways of accessing support.

Specialist Short Break providers

It is likely that all our specialist Short Break providers will be closing down their services over the next few weeks if they have not already done so. When they re-open, they will not be able to offer every family their full allocation of sessions for the year, but we will be in regular contact with them to agree how the sessions they can offer can be offered fairly to all children who wish to accept places.

Direct Payment Personal Assistants (PAs)

The Direct Payment Support Service has produced some really helpful information regarding PAs during COVID-19. Letters are being sent to all parents that access a PA support service via Direct Payments. If you have any urgent queries, please contact the DPSS employment team on 01603 222392 option 2.

New applications

We are suspending new applications to the team for the next three weeks initially. We will keep this under review, taking account of the ongoing situation. Please note that the process for new applications takes between 6-8 weeks as we have to set up bank accounts etc. Therefore, if we have not already accepted your new application and a Short Breaks Coordinator has not made contact with you already, it is unlikely that your child will be able to access Short Breaks for at least two months.

Renewals/Reviews

If your child's Short Breaks review is due in the next three months, we will contact you by phone or email before then to plan services for the next 12 months.

Contact with the Short Breaks team

As all of the team are working remotely at present, if you have any questions relating to the current issues regarding Short Breaks, please contact the team via email if possible on

cs.shortbreaks@norfolk.gov.uk

If you do not have access to email, please leave a message on 01603 692455 and we will try to call you back as soon as possible.



Happy snaps to help other families

Norfolk County Council Short Breaks team would like to hear from **families that have used their pre-paid card to buy toys or equipment for their child**. They would love you to send them pictures of your child enjoying their new toys or equipment so that they can share with the wider community to help make families aware how and on what they can spend their pre-paid card. It's also a really nice way to share some positive and happy photos of your children enjoying themselves.

If you would be happy for the Short Breaks team to use your child's photo or quotes on the NCC website, Twitter, press releases etc., please send your photos and/or quotes along with your consent, name and phone number to cs.shortbreaks@norfolk.gov.uk

The Local Offer Family Roadshow

**** Date changes ****

Please note revised dates opposite. Of course, it is difficult to be sure about the future at the moment, but if you book on to one of these dates, you will be contacted if any further changes need to be made.

The Local Offer Family Roadshow enables parent carers to:

- hear how the Local Offer is developing in Norfolk
- discuss recent feedback received through its online feedback form
- and give their views on local issues.

Organisations such as Family Voice Norfolk, Norfolk SEN Network, SENSational Families and Norfolk SEND Partnership have been invited to be there as well as a representative of the new **Preparing for Adult Life service**. There will be refreshments on arrival at 10:30 and a buffet lunch will be provided at 12:30.

To book your **free** place, send an email to send@norfolk.gov.uk with SEND Family Roadshow in the subject line and state:

- the date you wish to attend
- your name
- any dietary and accessibility requirements.



SEND
local offer

Family Roadshow

"Listening to children, young people, and their families... supporting inclusion, meeting needs and changing lives together"

Tuesday 30 June, 10:30am–1:00pm
Pensthorpe Nature Reserve

Friday 25 September, 10:30am–1:00pm
Charles Burrell Centre, Thetford

Wednesday 25 November, 10:30am–1:00pm
The Willow Centre, Cringleford

To book your place
send@norfolk.gov.uk



Email your questions on coronavirus and SEND

The Council for Disabled Children (CDC) is the umbrella body for the disabled children's sector, bringing together professionals, practitioners and policy-makers. Following the Minister's request (see page 15 of this newsletter), CDC has launched two new email inboxes aimed to answer questions, collate resources and share information on coronavirus and the impact on children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). They are designed to be used by professionals, practitioners, parent carers and families of children and young people with SEND.



The new 'CDC questions' inbox, CDCquestions@ncb.org.uk, provides the opportunity to ask questions about how coronavirus will impact on children and young people with SEND as well as other questions relating to the impact on families; the education, health, social care sectors; and the voluntary and community sector. CDC will collate Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and share them with the Department for Education (DfE) and Ministers as appropriate, in order to publish an FAQs newsflash each Friday.

Since the CDC Questions inbox was launched, several questions have been received and CDC is in the process of engaging with the DfE and other sector experts to raise issues and develop responses. These will be shared in the FAQ along with any further questions that we receive. In the meantime, please find below information from a range of sources that can support you:

If you are a parent carer with a question about your individual circumstances you may be able to find an answer here:

<https://contact.org.uk/advice-and-support/coronavirus-information-for-families-with-disabled-children>

<https://disabledchildrenspartnership.org.uk/coronavirus/>

For up-to-date government guidance and information for practitioners on supporting disabled children during the Coronavirus outbreak please visit the CDC website: <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/news-opinion/news/covid-19-support-and-guidance>

NHS England have produced a Frequently Asked Questions document which they are updating weekly. You can find this here: <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/nhs-england-nhs-improvement-frequently-asked-questions-faqs>

COVID-19 update: panel composition in the First-tier and Upper Tribunals

HM Courts & Tribunal Service has issued an update relating to panel composition in the First-tier and Upper Tribunals during the current COVID-19 pandemic, published on 19 March 2020. This can also be found at: <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/General-Panel-Composition-Pilot-Final-for-Publication-1.pdf>



Wellbeing

Kate Jones, Community Development Coordinator of Norfolk & Waveney Wellbeing Service, would like us to highlight that the Wellbeing Service is still available and is taking new referrals. It is working hard to offer support during this difficult time.

In line with the government's advice, the service has obviously had to adapt how it works, so all appointments will now be done by phone, video link or webinar. For further information about the current changes within the service, please follow the link below:

<https://www.wellbeingnands.co.uk/norfolk/get-support/coronaviruswehavemadesomechanges/>

Some free online support can also be accessed via their website. The clinical team is running a webinar workshop that covers managing your overall wellbeing and also includes specific coronavirus support: <https://www.wellbeingnands.co.uk/norfolk/course/online-everyday-wellbeingwithcoronavirussupport/>



Whether you're stressed, anxious,
low or depressed, we can help

Find out more...
www.wellbeingnands.co.uk



Community Support in Norfolk during the COVID-19 pandemic

Some 1.5 million people with underlying health conditions have already received a letter from central government which asks them to contact a national helpline so support can be arranged for them.

In addition to this, District Councils in Norfolk are also contacting these residents to ensure that they are safe and have access to food and support.

All residents in Norfolk

Over the next few days all Norfolk households will receive a letter from their local District Council outlining the local support available and directing people who need it either now or in the coming weeks, to contact a designated phone line on **0344 8008020** or visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/coronavirus

All callers to this number will be triaged to check if they have an existing allocated worker either from Children's or Adult Services and for immediate safeguarding issues.

They will then be given immediate support from the Children's or Adult Social Care team for their needs and then passed to their District Community hub in order to put appropriate community support in place.

It is important to be clear this Community Support at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic **does not replace normal social care and safeguarding for adults, children and families.**



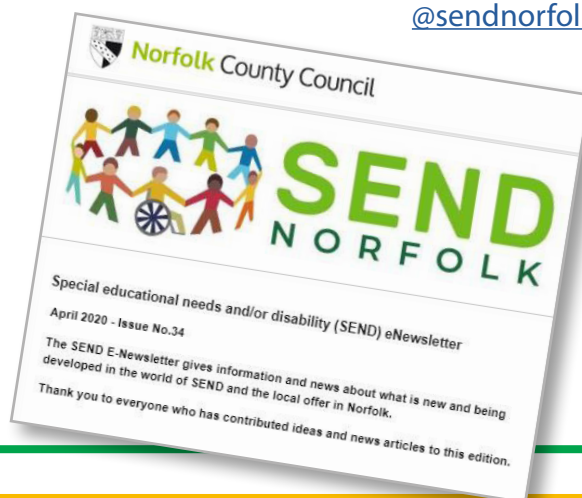
SEND eNewsletter

If you don't already subscribe to Norfolk's **free** SEND eNewsletter, or you've changed your email address, you can easily make sure you receive it at www.norfolk.gov.uk/send – the Local Offer website. The next newsletter is due in April 2020.

The newsletter is full of information about events and services in Norfolk that may be of interest to you and your family. It is produced as part of the Local Offer in co-production with Family Voice and other interested groups. If you have comments or would like to submit an article, contact the newsletter editors on send@norfolk.gov.uk

The SEND Local Offer also has an active Facebook page, which it uses as part of its SEND communication strategy, alongside Twitter and the SEND eNewsletter. Please 'like' the page and spread the word:

[@sendnorfolk](https://www.facebook.com/sendnorfolk)



Remember...

At Family Voice we are always keen to hear from you about the services you are receiving or would like to receive, so that we can inform decision-makers about what families really need.

- You can contact our Membership Secretary Kate on 07950 302937 or at membership@familyvoice.org.uk

- Or you can contact us via:



www.familyvoice.org.uk



[FamilyVoiceNorfolk](https://www.facebook.com/FamilyVoiceNorfolk)



[familyvoicenfk](https://twitter.com/familyvoicenfk)

Family Voice Norfolk newsletter deadlines

The next newsletter will appear at the end of April or early May 2020. If there are issues that you would like to see covered, please email comms@familyvoice.org.uk or leave a message on 07535 895748 before 28 April 2020.

At this extraordinary Easter time,
please take good care of each other.
Stay home and stay safe.

