



Swansea Parent Carer Forum

COVID-19

Information for Parent Carers

Issue 1 (26th May 2020)

Co-produced with Swansea Council and
Swansea Bay University Health Board





Swansea Parent Carer Forum are a voluntary group of parent carers all with children with additional needs. We have co-produced with Swansea Bay University Health Board and Swansea Council, the most frequently asked questions by parent carers at this time. This document will be updated to keep the information as current as possible. It is really important to us that we hear about your experiences accessing services and that you let us know what questions need answering.

We refer to 'your child/children' throughout this document on the clear understanding that you may also be looking after an adult child. This information is for parent carers whatever the age of their child.

Health

I'm worried about going to the doctor's or hospital during this virus - what do you suggest?

It's really important that you still get medical help or advice for the same issues that you would have done before the coronavirus epidemic. Not doing so could put your health at risk. All GPs and hospitals have adapted their services to keep you and your family as safe as possible.

I'm worried about taking my child to hospital as they need me to support their behaviour and communication. Will I be allowed to stay with them?

We know many parents are worried about not being able to stay with their children if they take them in to hospital and there has been some reassuring official advice which we have set out:

On 20th April, Wales' Chief Nursing Officer said people who don't have COVID-19 would be allowed to visit patients in a number of circumstances including:

- One parent or guardian for paediatric inpatients and neonates.
- Someone with a mental health issue such as dementia, a learning disability or autism, where not being present would cause the patient/service user to be distressed.

Arrangements should be discussed and agreed with the relevant Ward Manager so that your family's circumstances can be taken into account.



You can also prepare for a hospital visit by creating a 'Hospital Passport'

My Hospital Passport gives children a voice when visiting hospital. My Health Passport is a way for children and young people with autism, learning disabilities or complex health needs to share important information about themselves when accessing care in hospital. My Health Passport is a simple but important document that will empower children and young people and their families to communicate their needs, wishes and values to those caring for them. Using Widgit symbols, the passport contains three sections; things you must know about me; things important to me; and my likes and dislikes.

[Create your Hospital Passport](#)

Are Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) able to help my child at the moment?

Yes. CAMHS have adapted their service. Although routine face to face CAMHS outpatient clinic appointments have stopped, they are providing telephone consultations for advice, therapeutic support and medication monitoring. Face to face appointments are being offered on an individual basis as required to manage clinical need and risk.

They have a telephone service which is open for children, young people and their families for advice and support. It is open 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday. Please contact 01639 862744.

What's happening with assessments for ASD / ADHD?

Since 17th March, all face to face clinics were cancelled.

ASD appointments are continuing using video calls. Where possible, the Neurodevelopmental Disorders Team can offer assessments, but this may not always be practical.

ADHD referrals are now starting using video calls.

If there are any queries, the team can be contacted on 01639 862459.

My child has toothache, can they be treated?

Although it is recommended all non-urgent dental care is suspended until further notice, if you think you have an urgent dental care need you may be able to be treated in an urgent care centre. Phone your normal dentist to get advice in the first instance or 111 out of working hours if it is urgent.

Early years

My child is under 5 and has Additional Learning Needs and I am a Keyworker. They are usually cared for by family members whilst I am at work, however this is not possible at the moment. Can my child access additional support if I need them to attend a childcare setting to enable me to work?

Yes. Swansea's Family Information Service can provide you with information on the childcare settings that are operational. The childcare setting will be able to apply for additional funding to support your child's needs. Please contact them on 07827 822729 for further information.

I am feeling overwhelmed with trying to support my pre-school child's additional learning needs and need some support.

Who can I contact?

Swansea Children's Centre are offering support from one of their Early Years Additional Learning Needs specialists. You can contact them on 01792 572060 and a member of the team will call you back to discuss your worries and concerns. They will be able to offer you advice with supporting your child's needs as well as your own wellbeing.

I am worried about my child's speech and language development. Can I still access support?

Yes. The Speech and Language Therapy Team are continuing to provide support. Please contact them on 01792 517863. You will receive a call back where advice can be given and further support identified where needed. The Early Years Team have also produced some advice on how to support your child's speech and language development.

[Click here for support](#)



My child's community paediatrician had intended to refer them for a Statutory Assessment of their Additional Learning Needs before they start school. This has not happened and they are due to start school in September. What can I do next?

You should contact your community paediatrician through The Children's Development Centre (Hafan Y Mor) on 01792 200400.

My child is due to start Nursery / Reception in September and I am worried about this transition. How can I make sure their needs are met at school?

Your child's school should be in touch with you in the near future to plan for this. Primary Schools are working hard with the Educational Psychologists to develop transition pathways for young children with Additional Learning Needs who are due to start in Nursery or Reception in September.

I have an older child with Additional Learning Needs and I am worried about the development of their younger sibling. What should I do?

Contact your GP or Health Visitor in the normal way who are still able to refer to supporting services. Children's clinics are able to offer virtual appointments where appropriate. You may also wish to contact the Children's Centre on 01792 572060 where you can discuss any concerns.

As we are self-isolating, I thought it might be a good time to try toileting my child, but I don't know where to start as he/she has developmental delay.

It could be a great time to try out toilet training. Contact the Child Disability Health team who normally run toileting workshops. They will work with you remotely through some tried and tested strategies. Contact them on 01639 862797.

I have a young child with additional needs whose behaviours have become more challenging since lockdown is there anyone who can help?

Lockdown is very challenging for families and some children in particular. You can get support from the Child Disability Health team by contacting 01639 862797. They normally run behaviour workshops for families and continue to provide support as normal, albeit remotely.

This website is also helpful for advice and support in this area:

[Click here for support](#)

Child Services

Can I furlough my child's PA or should I continue to pay them?

Parent Carers who receive direct payments to employ PAs are generally expected to continue paying them, as direct payments are still being paid. However, there are a small number of scenarios where furloughing might be appropriate. Take a look at Social Care Wales for further advice:

[Click here for support](#)

You can also contact the Direct Payment team to discuss this further on 01792 636445 or DPSupport@swansea.gov.uk.

I can no longer use my child's PA. Can I use their Direct Payments to support their needs in other ways such as buying resources they can use to manage their needs in the house?

Yes. If you think you can support your child's needs by purchasing equipment but please contact your social worker to discuss before you purchase anything.

Each week gets harder and harder. My child's meltdowns and aggression are getting worse and I'm feeling really unwell due to the stress. We are all physically and mentally drained. Can I get any help?

The Child Disability Team have already been able to support families whose needs have increased during the current situation.



Please contact your social worker on 01792 635180 to discuss what additional support can be provided. If you do not have a social worker, please contact the Information, Advice and Assistance Team on 01792 635700 or access.information@swansea.gov.uk.

If your child is of school age, then you can also speak to your school who can work with you and help you get the support you need. Schools are able to refer to the Early Help Hubs (previously Team Around the Family, Family Partnership Team and Evolve) as well as specialists in behaviour and additional needs.

You can directly contact Early Help Hubs on 01792 635400 or earlyhelphubs@swansea.gov.uk who can offer support from birth to 18.

This website is also helpful for advice and support in this area:

[Click here for support](#)

Adult Services

My adult child's day provision is now closed and they have moved some of their services online. Can I still continue to use my Direct Payments to access them?

Yes. If you think the adapted service can still support your child, then confirm with your social worker.

My adult child's day provision is completely closed yet I still received an invoice for their service. What should I do?

You may be asked to continue to pay using your direct payments for publicly funded services even though they are not available. You may want to discuss with your provider the detail of any agreement you may have with them and if they can offer support in different ways during this time. If you are not obliged to pay providers you may be able to use your direct payment to meet your needs in a different way during this time.

Please contact your social worker or the Direct Payment team to discuss this further on 01792 636445 or DPsupport@swansea.gov.uk.

Will I still be charged for local authority day services if they are closed?

No, all charges for day and respite services have been suspended during this time.

I am really struggling to support my adult child. I am desperate for a break, what can be done?

Some emergency respite is available so please contact your social worker to discuss if this would be appropriate or if there is other support that can be put in place.

We have non-agency carers coming to the house and we can't get hold of any PPE to protect them and ourselves.

Swansea Council can provide all direct payment recipients with required PPE by contacting 01792 636445 or DPsupport@swansea.gov.uk. If you are able to source your own PPE you can purchase them using your direct payments fund.

I am really worried that my adult child's support will be reduced if we are seen to be coping. Might this happen?

No, your ability to cope during the pandemic will not influence decisions made about your ability to cope in normal times. The LA is aware many families are supporting individuals to keep them safe in this extraordinary time and acknowledge that this is not sustainable in the long term.

Education

My child's annual review is due, will it still take place?

Yes. Annual Reviews are still taking place, some virtually, using video conferencing software, but there are cases where professionals and/or parent carers are unable or unhappy to do it in this way. In these cases, the Review may need to be delayed until it is possible to reschedule when all agree to the format of the meeting.

My child has Free School Meals but won't eat anything from the food package, is there another option?

As of Monday 25th May, families in receipt of free school meals have a choice of receiving a BACS payment straight into their bank account or can continue with a weekly food bag.

My child wasn't eligible for FSM but our circumstances have changed. Am I now able to apply for FSM?

Yes. The quickest, cheapest and easiest way to apply for free school meals is online:

[Apply for free meals](#)

To find out more about free school meals and other ways to apply, more information can be found here:

[Find out more about free school meals](#)



We only have limited access to the internet via my phone and/or only one device between all the children. How can my child carry on learning / access what school are providing?

There is a Welsh Government programme to provide access to the internet for those families who do not have it. Please contact your school for further information.

We are really struggling to cope at home. Can my child go into school?

Key workers and vulnerable learners can access childcare from school hubs if there is no safe alternative. Please contact your school or social worker to discuss if this is the right option for your family or if other support is available.

School Hubs follow strict social distancing rules, children do not play together and staff are advised to maintain social distancing where possible.

We are getting work to do at home from school, but it hasn't been differentiated for my child's additional needs. What should I do?

Contact your class teacher or ALNCO at school. They should be able to provide work to do at home which is suitable for your child's need.



My child needs lots of support and their teacher has told me to access HWB Classrooms. I don't know what this is - or how to access it.

HWB is a Welsh Government platform that provides many free digital tools and age/level appropriate resources. To access HWB, the website is <https://hwb.gov.wales>. All children in state schools in Wales have a login to HWB. Ask your child or your child's teacher for their username and password. Your school may use the different tools within HWB to set class work. This link provides some HWB support for parent carers:

[Click here for support](#)

I could do with some advice from a specialist teacher/ OT / Behaviour specialist. Who can I contact?

The Council's Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Team continue to support parent carers of learners during this time.

Schools are working hard to support children with additional learning needs and you should contact your child's school for advice and support.

Access to specialist support can be arranged via your school. If you need further advice, you can contact ALNU@swansea.gov.uk.

I and others think my child needs a Statement of Educational Need. We had started the process, but what is going on at the moment? Is the process continuing?

Yes. Currently there is no immediate change to what local authorities have to do. Your school should be able to give you an update on how your child's assessment is progressing, otherwise you can contact alnu@swansea.gov.uk to get an update. You may also take the opportunity to discuss any particular needs that you have at this time.

I have an appeal in progress to the SENTW - will it still go ahead?

Yes. Appeals continue to be processed. The SENTW have asked that all correspondence including application forms and written submissions be sent to their e-mail as they have very limited, or no access to items delivered by post. Their e-mail address is Tribunal.Enquiries@gov.wales.

My child has additional needs and I am very concerned about the transition from primary to secondary school?

Swansea's secondary schools are working hard to prepare transition paths for Primary Year 6 pupils to prepare them for their new school when they enter Year 7. Your child will be contacted by their new schools with transition packs in the very near future, if they haven't already. Additional preparation for children with ALN continues between the secondary schools ALNCOs and their primary school counterparts and you should receive information about this in due course.

Parent carers

I'm having difficulty with managing my child's bedtime and sleep routine, he/she won't settle until very late and wakes during the night.

This can be an exhausting time for families. The Child Disability Health team can help guide you through the steps they usually advise in their sleep workshops. They continue to work as per usual but remotely at this time. Contact them on 01639 862797.

As a parent carer, can I access PPE equipment?

Yes you can. The LA has made PPE available for unpaid carers and this is being managed by Swansea Carers Centre who can take you through the eligibility criteria. You can order two weeks supply at a time and Swansea Carers Centre will deliver this to you. Please contact Swansea Carers Centre to enquire on 01792 653344 or admin@swanseacarerscentre.org.

I am a single parent and I have been stopped from going into a supermarket because I have to bring my children with me. I cannot leave them at home. What can be done about this?

We have heard of several incidents where this has happened. We understand that guidance has been issued to supermarkets on the particular difficulties parent carers and carers supporting the independence of adults have and they have responded positively. Please let us know if you are having continuing difficulties.



I am still struggling to get online orders or to collect food and prescriptions. Can anyone help us?

Yes, there is lots of help out there. Swansea Council for Voluntary Service will be able to direct you to the support you need - whether that's prescription collection, help with shopping, or just someone to talk to:

[Click here for support](#)

There is also an extensive network of Local Area Co-ordinators who can put you in touch with local volunteers:

[Click here for support](#)

We have recently received a shielding letter. How can I get help?

Help and support is available from the council for those who do not have friends, relatives, neighbours or voluntary organisations to assist them. This can be accessed by emailing at Covid19@Swansea.gov.uk or via the council's helpline on 01792 636363.

My 12 year old daughter helps with the care of her sibling. I'm worried about her emotional wellbeing as she is not able to get much of a break due to the restrictions. Is there any support for her?

Yes. Swansea YMCA continues to provide support for young carers aged 8-18 across Swansea. They offer activities, assessments and a range of other support, including 1:1 and group support via a range of online platforms such as video conferencing. Please get in touch with Egija Cinvska on 07946 348878 or egija@ymcaswansea.org.uk.

My child's DLA/PIP benefit is due to be reviewed. Where can I get help?

Swansea Carers Centre continues to offer support for ALL benefits; DLA, PIP, AA, UC, UC50, ESA50, Council Tax Reduction, Carers Allowance, Benefit checks and any benefit query you may have.

These forms are being completed over the phone, the benefit advisers can talk you through each question and answer. You can WhatsApp photos of evidence to them.

Please phone 07984 445493 / 07984 445491 and a telephone appointment will be booked for you.

I am worried about what will happen to my child if I become ill from COVID-19.

The risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19 is still very small. It might be reassuring to know that if an emergency does happen, replacement care for your child will get sorted out quickly.

Carers UK have an excellent guide to creating an emergency plan for you and all those you look after:

Visit Carers UK for more information





If you still have any unanswered questions or experiences that you want to share with us then please let us know at info@swanseapcf.org.

Acknowledgements

A huge thank you to Swansea Parent Carer Forum members, to parent carers and local parent carer led groups/organisations whose wisdom, experience and voice is so important to our children's and families future.

