

# **Information for parents who have a social worker, MAST worker or SNIPS worker**

## **Contact details**

MAST: 0114 203 7485

Children with Disabilities Service (including Preparation for Adult Team): 0114 2735198

SNIPS (Special Needs Inclusion Playcare Service: 0114 2735368

This information sheet is to help parents and carers navigate the support that is available to them during the current covid-19 situation.

## **General**

### **Q How can social care be proactive in supporting families?**

**A** Social workers, MAST and SNIP workers are all actively contacting the families on their caseloads to ensure that the right support is in place. This is being done with face-to-face visits, virtual visits and support as well as telephone contact. All face-to-face visits are taking social distancing precautions and some workers may wear personal protective equipment so as not to place families or themselves at risk. If families are self-isolating, then these visits will on the whole be virtual. We are also working closely with education and schools to ensure that children are accessing schools or are receiving support from teaching staff.

### **Q I am really struggling to cope, is there any additional support that can be offered?**

**A** Please contact the Children with Disabilities Team for any emergency packages that are needed and for advice about other options available.

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## **Direct Payments**

### **Q Now that short breaks services have stopped, can parents request funds to pay for resources and equipment instead, e.g. tablet computer, broadband connection, or a trampoline?**

**A** We understand that the current situation is a challenge for many families but particularly when children have additional needs. Where a family already receives a direct payment, widening its use to enable the purchase of equipment or other relevant resources is possible. Please ensure all receipts are kept for any equipment that is purchased. Alternatively, we can purchase equipment on behalf of a family and would suggest that the

family speak to their worker about this. We also have some volunteers who are able to help with more practical things that families may need.

**Q Can families who are NOT currently receiving Direct Payments, but would normally get a SNIPS service or overnight respite, switch to Direct Payments now, and switch back to a service when things are back to normal? If so, who should they contact, and how long would it take to process such a request?**

A Because of the way that direct payments are set up, it can take a long time to arrange. However, if families identify what would assist them, then please contact your social worker, SNIPS worker or MAST worker to discuss.

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## **Personal assistants (PAs)**

**Q Do we continue to pay PAs if we (as a family) decide to cancel shifts due to self-isolating?**

A We advise you to pay the PA as you would for the weeks missed due to the family self-isolating.

**Q I do not want my PA working at this current time; do I have to pay them?**

A If you are asking the PA to not attend work, then you will still need to pay the PA for the hours they would have worked.

**Q Can a PA still be paid a normal wage if they need to self-isolate?**

A If your PA is unwell, Covid-19 sick pay guidance applies (please see [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) SSP). If your PA has to self-isolate, we ask that you continue to pay the PA their usual hours for the time they are isolating.

**Q My PA does not wish to work at this current time; do I still have to pay them?**

A If the PA is not self-isolating or supporting their own family who are shielding following a confirmation letter, then we ask that they take holidays or unpaid leave.

**Q My PA has had to stop working to look after their family, is there any other support I can access?**

Individuals who require support and their PA is no longer available can use Disability Sheffield's new [Covid-19 PA register](#). This holds the details of PAs and other support workers (e.g. from day services) who are available for work, and can match people who need support with a potential PA. If you are paying a PA who is self-isolating, please contact the Children with Disabilities team who can support with additional funding for a second PA.

**Q If a PA is unable to support a child because they or the child is self-isolating, can direct payments be used to pay a family member to provide care?**

**A** Due to the current situation, the normal guidelines about family members can be more flexible and therefore you will be able to pay a family member. Please contact the Children with Disabilities Service in respect of this on the number at the top of this article.

**Q What if I contract Coronavirus, can my PAs access PPE? Do we need to pay for this?**

**A** PAs can access PPE for free by contacting Disability Sheffield on [CV19@disabilitysheffield.org.uk](mailto:CV19@disabilitysheffield.org.uk) or **0114 2536750**. Please consider the government guidelines to when PPE is required.

**Q Can I pay for my PA to travel to work in a taxi instead of using public transport?**

**A** Yes, please record any additional spend and keep receipts for auditing purposes.

**Q Can I have my PAs work longer shifts, e.g. 30 hours in a run?**

**A** All shifts would have to comply with the [employment law requirements](http://www.ACAS.org.uk) (please see [www.ACAS.org.uk](http://www.ACAS.org.uk)) for work hours.

**Q Can I pay my PAs who are providing non-contact support or virtual support?**

**A** Yes, e.g. for shopping on behalf of the family or providing virtual lessons.

**Q Are PAs classed as key workers?**

**A** Yes PAs are classed as key workers. An authorisation letter is available via Voluntary Action Sheffield on [info@vas.org.uk](mailto:info@vas.org.uk) and **0114 253 6600** or contact Disability Sheffield on **0114 2536750**.

**Q If day provision is cancelled, can I use the funds that would have been used to pay for this, to increase my PA hours?**

**A** We have agreed to this when people were accessing club provision and a PA and the clubs have closed.

**Q I am a PA and the individual I support has decided to self-isolate with their family and does not require my support. Can I work as a PA for someone else?**

**A** Yes, we encourage PAs who would like to redeploy or work additional hours to contact Disability Sheffield on **0114 2536750** and sign up to the [Covid-19 PA register](#).

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## **Transition to adult social care**

**Q How will young people who are leaving education and transitioning to adult social care this summer be supported?**

**A** Workers in the Preparation for Adult team are remaining in regular contact with all families on their caseload. We are providing an on call "duty" worker Monday to Friday. Each special school and Sheffield College has a named link worker /workers in the team. The care and

support plans do not need to have a panel and we can be flexible about the support that we can provide.

Special schools and colleges are in close contact with Special Educational Needs team (this is where SENDSARS are based), and the planning and support for school and college leavers will continue. Providers are also being flexible. Plans for young people who are leaving education should be being developed now.

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## **Other**

**Q How can parents prove to the authorities that their child has a disability and needs to go outside more than once a day?**

**A** We understand that many children, due to their additional needs, may need to go out of the home more than once per day. In order to alleviate concerns that this may be questioned, a letter can be provided to families outlining the reasons for the additional outside exercise.

**Q What are the plans for this year's Short Break Scheme?**

**A** The plans for the short grants scheme will remain the same as previous years.

**Q Regarding families who don't have the equipment or internet connectivity needed to complete school work: if these families have a social worker but are NOT currently receiving Direct Payments, can they now get a laptop provided via the new [government scheme](#)?**

**A** We have collated all the information and are awaiting more information about the laptops.

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## **Additional Support**

We are looking at the possibility of using the Thornbridge Outdoors centre to offer some daytime support. We will contact families as soon as we have more information about this.

The Parenting Team have also been busy and have their own [YouTube channel](#) for parenting and early years. They are beginning to develop more videos for parents of children with disabilities. Topics include:

- Descriptive commenting to develop language in children
- Praising your children and positive attention
- Developing your new baby's brain
- Sleep
- Messy play activities and other early years topics.

More will be added each week.

The Children's Involvement team have already provided lots of children across the city with activity packs; they also have packs specifically designed for children with disabilities.

Please contact your Social worker, SNIPs worker or MAST worker if you haven't yet had one.

The [information provided by Disability Sheffield](#) for employers of PAs is also useful.

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