



Vicky Ford MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT

tel: **I&S** www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

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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.