



Information Resources

Your rights during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Welfare Benefits

Comprehensive summary of support available:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/health/coronavirus-what-it-means-for-you/>

Check what benefits you can get if you are affected by coronavirus:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/coronavirus-check-what-benefits-you-can-get/>

Check what support you can get if you are struggling to pay bills because of coronavirus:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/if-you-cant-pay-your-bills-because-of-coronavirus/>

If you are already claiming benefits, you might be able to get more money if you're earning less because of coronavirus. A reduction in your earnings is a change in circumstances that should be notified to the relevant authority if you are getting a means tested benefit, such as:

- Housing benefit – contact Newham Council housing benefit team
- Council tax reduction – contact Newham Council council tax team
- Universal Credit – report your reduced earnings to Universal Credit

Free school meals: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools>

Other advice resources:

<https://askcpaq.org.uk/publications/-216847/benefits-and-coronavirus>

<https://www.turn2us.org.uk/get-support/Benefits-and-Coronavirus-Sickness>

NB there is currently legal action being looked into around increasing carer's allowance during the pandemic.

Health & Social Care:

Practical support in Newham

#HelpNewham - <https://www.newham.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-19-support-vulnerable-high-risk-people/1>

To access this help, if you meet the criteria, you can fill in the form at the link above or email help@newham.gov.uk or call 0208 430 2000.

#HelpNewham offers support to:

- Residents aged over 70 who live alone and do not have the support of friends or family
- Those who receive support through adult social care and who have health conditions identified by the NHS
- Young people whom we care for or support through social services
- Families with children with special educational needs and disabilities
- Members of our street homeless community
- Families living in temporary accommodation
- Those who have been contacted directly by the NHS as part of their programme to shield 1.5 million people nationwide

If you identify with any of the above Newham Council can provide you with the following support:

- Home delivery of food and essential items (e.g. toothpaste, sanitary items)
- Home delivery of prescription medication
- Someone to talk to via our befriending telephone chat service

NHS Shield (for Newham):

If you have been contacted directly by the NHS as part of their programme to shield 1.5 million people nationwide and you wish to seek support please contact shieldreliefhub@newham.gov.uk or call 020 8430 2000, select option 9 - COVID-19.

If you have not received a letter, then you can apply here: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable>

Legal/Advice resources

Adult Social care

The government has significantly reduced the duties that local authorities owe in relation to adult social care.

The official government guidance is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-changes-to-the-care-act-2014/care-act-easements-guidance-for-local-authorities>

This webinar by Steve Broach is very helpful in explaining the law changes simply but slightly out of date as the law regarding social care is now in force, as is the law for SEND. This is the link to the recording: <https://youtu.be/j5RU9DFIzQM>

Here are some other resources which help to explain the changes:

<https://insights.doughtystreet.co.uk/post/102g3ng/how-does-the-coronavirus-act-2020-alter-the-care-act-2014>

<https://www.autism.org.uk/services/helplines/coronavirus.aspx>

<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/news-opinion/news/covid-19-support-and-guidance>

NICE critical care guidelines: <https://www.hja.net/press-releases/nice-amends-covid-19-critical-care-guideline-after-judicial-review-challenge>

Care Act changes – an easy read guide: <https://www.dorsetadvocacy.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/covid19-care-act-guidance.pdf>

Children's social care

The Coronavirus Act itself does not change any children's social care duties. However, the government is attempting to introduce 'easements' to certain duties by way of guidance and regulations.

The regulations are summarised very clearly here and are currently subject to a legal challenge: <https://article39.org.uk/2020/04/23/ministers-use-covid-19-to-destroy-childrens-safeguards/>

The government has also published guidance, which is due to be amended imminently following a legal challenge by our service. Our current view is that the guidance is unlawful and we await the amended version (due w/c 4 May) before commenting further. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-childrens-social-care-services/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-childrens-social-care>

Education/SEN

Things are understandably a bit confusing at the moment, as schools have closed, save for children of keyworkers and those who are 'vulnerable' and/or who have EHC plans. Some schools have closed completely.

The official government guidance is here and seems to be getting updated almost daily:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people#children-with-education-health-and-care-ehc-plans>

This free handbook written by Hayley Mason of SEN Legal is very helpful at answering some of the questions parents may have about their child's education: https://f528279b-dcf0-4117-b5aa-563b48d7bd12.filesusr.com/ugd/6f42ce_08b18fc703f74e08b639d57606113e3b.pdf

NB From **1 May**, the government has passed new regulations relaxing some local authority duties relating to EHCPs to 'reasonable endeavours'. These changes are explained here: <https://www.specialneedsjungle.com/coronavirus-ehcp-laws-temporarily-relaxed-as-las-told-to-just-do-their-best/>

The detailed announcement from the DFE is here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/882290/CV19_Act_modification_notice_SEND.pdf

Here are some other helpful resources:

<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/news-opinion/news/covid-19-support-and-guidance>

<https://www.sen-covid-19.co.uk/>

Disabled Children Handbook by Steve Broach and Luke Clements now available online for free: <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/disabled-children-legal-handbook-3rd-edition>

Housing

Newham homelessness service updates including rough sleepers:

<https://www.newham.gov.uk/Pages/Services/Homelessness-advice-and-support.aspx>

There are some significant changes around evictions and some options for those who are struggling to pay rent or mortgages. See info on these websites:

https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/coronavirus

<https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/insight/insight/up-to-date-government-coronavirus-advice-for-housing-providers-65660>

<https://www.homeless.org.uk/covid19-homelessness>

Seeking legal advice:

Please find out if you are eligible for legal aid here: <https://www.gov.uk/check-legal-aid>

Find your local legal aid provider here: <https://find-legal-advice.justice.gov.uk/>

If you are eligible for legal aid, please seek advice from a provider with a legal aid contract. UCL iLAC has legal aid contracts for community care and housing, and we are happy to assist subject to capacity.

For welfare benefits cases: there is no legal aid for welfare benefits advice. UCL iLAC is able to assist pro bono, subject to capacity.

For education cases: where you are eligible for legal aid, please seek advice from a provider with a legal aid contract. If you are not eligible and unable to afford a solicitor, we can provide pro bono assistance, subject to capacity.

Where we have no capacity, we will do our best to signpost you to other providers who may be able to help.