

contact

For families
with disabled children

Hello and welcome to the latest edition of *What's new*.

In this week's newsletter, you'll find updated government guidance on school closures in England, a public survey about the National Strategy for Disabled Children, and our reaction to the new Rare Diseases Framework.

Don't forget, if you need any advice or support, our free helpline is open between 9.30am and 5pm Monday to Friday. You can call us on 0808 808 3555. We also have a [Live Chat](#) service so you can ask us about your rights to services and support.

National Free School Meals Voucher scheme starts this week in England

Yesterday in England saw [the launch of the Free School Meals voucher scheme](#). The scheme runs for four weeks, from 18 January - 12 February.

Each of the UK nations are running similar schemes, but the way these work will differ. Find Covid-19 information across the UK at:

- [England](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)
- [Scotland](#)
- [Wales](#)

Government publishes guidance on school closures in England

Over the last week the government has published [more guidance around the closure of schools in England](#).

[In the same story](#), we advise what you can do if your child has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan but you've been told they can't attend school.

To keep up-to-date with the latest education updates, visit [our Covid-19 and education page](#), including [advice for families whose child is still attending school](#).

Rare Diseases Framework brings four UK nations together to improve care and diagnosis

Last week the government published a [new UK Rare Diseases Framework](#) setting out the key priorities for rare diseases in the UK over the next five years – our rare conditions information officer [Rachel Gibson welcomes the news](#).

We have lots of [information about rare conditions on our website](#). Our [A-Z of Medical Conditions](#) has information on hundreds on conditions, and you can also read [all about diagnosis](#), including the support available for [children who don't have a diagnosis](#).

Survey launched on National Strategy for Disabled People

The government has launched [a public survey as part of developing a National Strategy for Disabled People](#). The survey is a chance for disabled people and their carers, friends and family to share views and life experiences.

The survey will be open until 23 April 2021. **Responses received before 13 February 2021 will inform the development of the National Strategy.** Those received after this date will be used to inform its delivery.

[Take part in the survey online at Citizen Space](#).

Our Fledglings online shop is full of ideas to help with home schooling

Are you finding it hard keeping your child on track with their school work while at home? Our [Fledglings online shop](#) has some great ideas to help make home learning easier and more fun for you and your children. Take a look at our [writing slopes](#) to help improve your child's seating posture when studying. While our [Understanding Feelings set](#) can help your child better understand and communicate their feelings in a fun and interactive way. And our [dual power timers](#) can be used to help children move from one activity to another during online schooling sessions, games and more

Dates for your diary

Here you'll find our latest workshop sessions, webinars and more!

Last chance for Scottish families to join our workshops

We have a number of workshops from tomorrow, Wednesday 20 January, covering a wide range of issues including sleep, encouraging positive behaviour and preparing for adult life, money matters and parent carer wellbeing. [Take a look at the workshops on offer for parent carers in Scotland and how to book.](#)

And wherever you live, [you can sign up to our other virtual workshops](#) on siblings, educational support, handling meetings effectively, and more!

Finding lockdown difficult? Our support team are here for you

Do you simply just need someone to listen to how you're feeling? Our Listening Ear service is here for you. Our family support workers can talk through anything you like, at a time of your choosing. We have plenty of appointments, so whether you just want a quick chat or a lengthy call, there's a space for everyone. [Book online at Eventbrite.](#)

Get your free copy of our Helpful Guide sent to your letterbox

Our all-in-one book has all the information and help you need to enjoy family life. [Get your free copy of our Helpful guide for families with disabled children](#) straight to your letterbox.

Thanks for reading What's new!

If you haven't already, subscribe to [our other email newsletters](#) or [get your free copy of our Helpful guide for families with disabled children](#) straight to your letterbox.

You can also visit [the Contact website](#) for advice and information about any concern you might, visit [our Fledglings online shop](#) full of practical products for your child and family, [join our closed \(private\) Facebook group](#) for parent carers or [sign up to one of our virtual family workshops](#).

If you can't find what you need you can call Contact's free helpline on 0808 808 3555 between 9.30am-5pm Monday to Friday, [use our Live Chat](#), or email helpline@contact.org.uk.

And if you're interested in ways to support our work, find out about [the Contact Weekly Lottery](#).