



for families with children and young people
with special educational needs and disabilities



East Sussex
Parent
Carer
Forum



Reaching
Families



Gold Commander Sussex COVID19 Response

Chief Inspector Sussex Police

9th April 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Request for the Police to offer understanding and a flexible response to the needs of disabled children and young people when undertaking their CV19 exercise.

We understand the exceptional circumstances in which we are all working and the need for the Police to be ensuring the safety of the public during the COVID19 crisis.

Our organisations are working hard to support and represent the community of families with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, who are some of the most vulnerable at this time.

We are regularly in touch with many families, across Sussex, who have children with a wide range of disabilities and additional needs including learning disabilities, ADHD and autism, who are finding the 'lockdown' particularly difficult or unmanageable for some. Children, young people and their parents and carers are finding they are facing much higher levels of stress and anxiety and are seeing their mental health deteriorate.

Some families have reported not being able to physically contain their child(ren) with additional needs in the house safely as their child is so desperate to get out, access their local park and their normal routine, and it is very difficult for parents and carers to explain why this is not possible and in some cases physically restrain them. We have heard about a few instances where they have been stopped by the Police and asked to return home.

As such we write jointly to ask for the support and understanding of all Sussex-wide Police teams to be briefed and uphold the new guidance issued from the Cabinet Office with regards to people with significant health conditions – which will include our families with disabled children and young people.

Please see the relevant extract from the latest guidance published from the Cabinet Office:

15. Can I exercise more than once a day if I need to due to a significant health condition?

*You can leave your home for medical need. If you (or a person in your care) have a specific health condition that requires you to leave the home to maintain your health - **including if that involves travel beyond your local area** - then you can do so. This could, for example, include **where individuals with learning disabilities or autism require specific exercise in an open space two or three times each day** - ideally in line with a care plan agreed with a medical professional.*

Even in such cases, in order to reduce the spread of infection and protect those exercising, travel outside of the home should be limited, as close to your local area as possible, and you should remain at least 2 metres apart from anyone who is not a member of your household or a carer at all times.

You can find the full guidance here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities often:

- Need to be able to exercise away from familiar people as they would not be able to social distance effectively
- Need for more movement and exercise than we can safely sustain at home, due to sensory needs and/or hyperactivity
- Need to be taken away from main roads, due to a lack of road safety
- Need to follow exercise routine from pre-lockdown, due to heightened anxiety
- Need to be in a quiet place to exercise, due to anxiety and/or sensory needs

In Brighton and Hove and West Sussex, many of these families will be easily identifiable by having Compass Card which illustrates their disability has been determined as having a significant effect on daily life. Or across Sussex they might have an award letter for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP), an Education Health and Care plan (EHCP).

We ask:

For car drivers:

- to be allowed to use their car (or take a taxi journey) to safely reach a location that meets their access or mobility needs, or to ensure they do not encounter people their child would approach due to not understanding social distancing measures.

For non-car drivers:

- to be allowed to access local park and outdoor recreational equipment
- Police and BHCC to work together to identify safe spaces in walking distance from the family home, for CYP to play outdoors, these spaces will need to meet the needs of the CYP e.g.: a school playground with a basketball hoop, swing etc.

You might have read that France has relaxed its rules for people with learning disabilities and autism – please see here: <https://metro.co.uk/2020/04/02/france-eases-lockdown-autistic-people-can-go-reassuring-places-12499265/?fbclid=IwAR0x2Ym7dvzL2ai-aQEI9cv25AL1LuHWd3QvHZIexrz0BXEgXfqthx0CHbE>

We would be very grateful if you could agree this approach across Sussex and let all your officers know this is acceptable. It would be great if you could let us know if achievable. Equally if you would like to discuss this further then please do not hesitate to contact us for more information.

Yours faithfully



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Cc:

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