

Returning to School



Purpose

Who is this document for?

This document is designed for school leaders to support the emotional wellbeing of staff and students in returning to school following Covid-19 lockdown arrangements.

Why has it been developed?

The Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown arrangements will have impacted on members of the school community in different ways, but all will be affected to some extent. This document is designed to help schools put in place steps to support the wellbeing needs of all staff and pupils and plan more targeted support for vulnerable students. An audit of school and parent needs surrounding the return to school¹ showed that there was a high level of concern around this. The main concerns of school staff and parents include social aspects of school, reluctance to return to school, academic progress, and the mental health of children and young people. Support was requested regarding transition back to school and how to manage mental health, levels of motivation, how to support those with SEND, as well as how to support staff. This document aims to provide information which responds to these requests.

What does it cover?

Whilst safety is fundamental to wellbeing, details of practical steps to keep children and staff safe or to set up and teach classes have not been included in this document as this advice is already available from elsewhere (e.g. Department for Education, Herts for Learning).

The focus of this resource is on the other steps that need to be considered to promote emotional wellbeing; these take into account the impact of a prolonged absence from school and the experience of living in a time of uncertainty and threat to health. It also considers the needs of particular groups of students who may find transition especially difficult, such as those with autism or anxiety.

How can it be used?

This document can be used by school leaders, SENCos and Mental Health Leads to plan support at a whole school and individual pupil level. It includes a checklist of steps and further guidance on how schools can promote key elements of trauma support through transition arrangements.

How has this document been developed?

This document has been put together by members of the Educational Psychology Service but also incorporates information from the Communication and Autism Team and the Strategic Leads for Mental Health in Schools. It was created by reviewing the current guidance, psychology and research around supporting students during times of transition in the context of traumatic events.

¹ Completed by 238 staff and 1976 parents

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How can schools support the transition process?

This returning to school period is a huge transition for all – teachers, pupils and parents. It will be an on-going process until all pupils can return to school full-time. Periods of transition are challenging, and it is important to acknowledge this in how others are managing. People will have different feelings about returning to school which may be affected by their experiences of safety, belonging or achievement at school and at home.

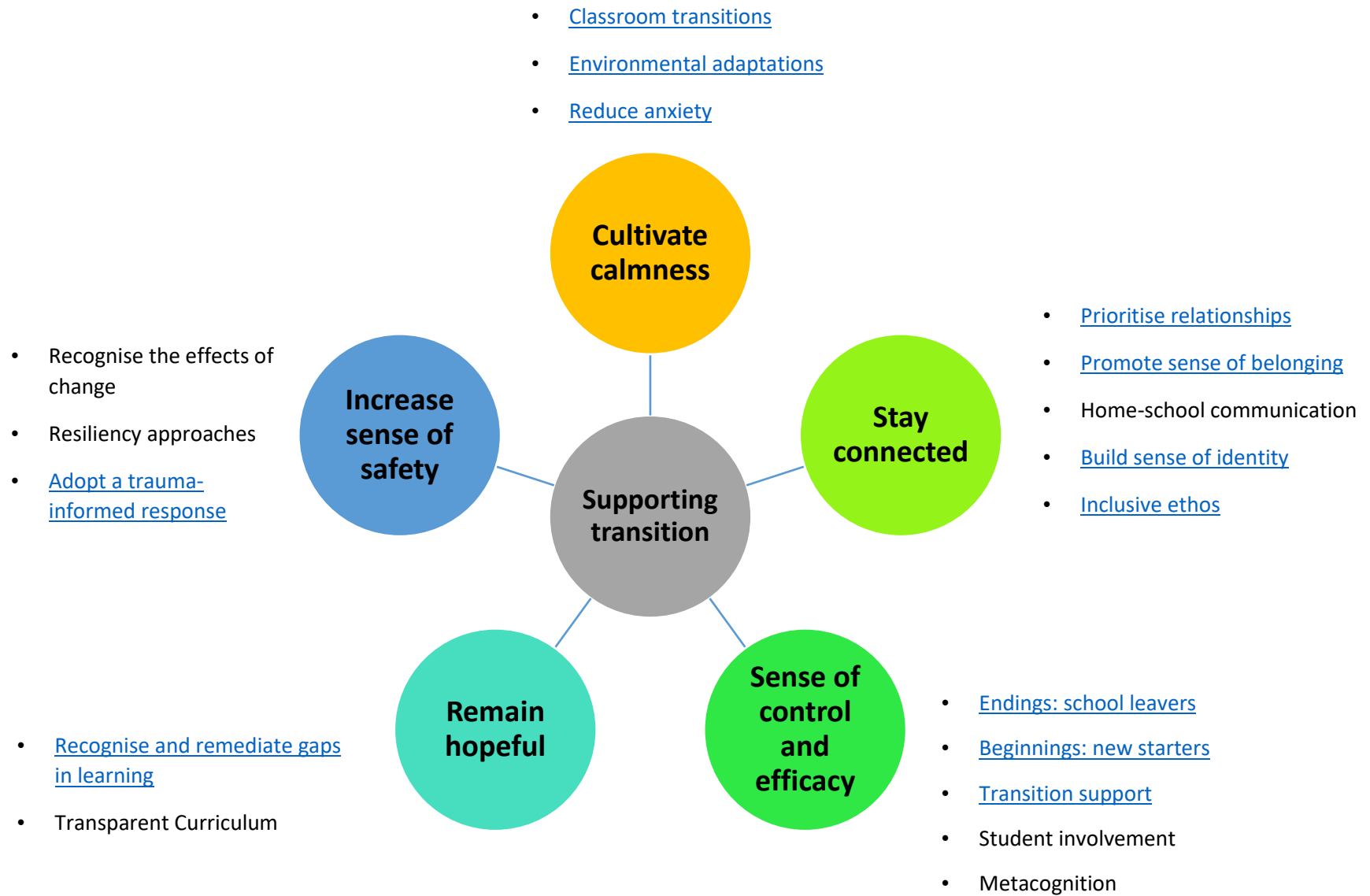
During this unsettled time, not only will there have been changes in everyone's lives regarding work and school, personal lives will have been affected too, by people not being able to connect with others or do the things that they usually do. A number of adults and children may also have experienced bereavement of those they love, and there has been a separate document written by the EPS on supporting those who have been bereaved. This means that while everyone has been in the same situation, their experiences of it will have been different.

School is an important community that all children and staff are a part of and will be a key part in the healing and moving on from this time. While there will be some children who need more specialist support to process what has happened, most will be able to manage with the nurturing and consistent support available from the trusted adults around them. In turn, staff will require support from school leaders and peers to enable them to make their own transition back to school and to support the transition of others. This document outlines the type of support that is likely to be helpful, but it is important to acknowledge that there is no 'one size fits all' approach.

This document is organised around key areas considered important for emotional wellbeing during times of trauma in a community. These relate to:

- **Sense of safety:** how safe people feel physically (including practical steps to meet that need) and psychologically (e.g. in being with others)
- **Sense of control and efficacy:** the extent to which people feel in control of their situation and have the skills as a community to manage it
- **Connectedness:** the opportunities people have to connect with others in a way that is supportive to them
- **Calmness:** the ability to remain calm in a situation
- **Hope:** the opportunities to remain hopeful in a situation by identifying strengths or feeling optimistic about the future

The mind map on the following page shows how each of these areas relates to transition. The checklist provides information on steps that schools can take to meet these needs. This is accompanied by specific information and practical examples of how to implement these steps to support the needs of staff and students.



Checklist for School Leaders and SENCos

This checklist is designed to support everyone, both staff and pupils. It is focused on the 'universal' approach, with more detailed information in later sections, as well as ideas for specific vulnerable pupils in later pages. Some of these ideas may be more appropriate when things have settled down within school.

Increase sense of safety



For [staff](#):

- ☐ Provide staff with opportunities to express their worries/concerns and ask questions about returning to school
- ☐ Be open and transparent with school members about decision-making by providing rationale for those decisions
- ☐ Provide staff with opportunities to express their concerns and ask questions about returning to school

For [pupils/families](#):

- ☐ Provide pupils and families with opportunities to express their worries/concerns and ask questions about returning to school
- ☐ Provide clear information about how/ whom pupils can access support in school if needed
- ☐ Make direct contact with vulnerable groups to check their experiences and plan additional supports for transition (e.g. pupils with EHCPs, known to social care)
- ☐ Provide reassurance that you are following government and other guidance (e.g. Herts for Learning) for safety measures
- ☐ Provide guidance on how to look after yourselves and each other (e.g. washing hands)
- ☐ Provide a predictable and consistent daily routine, but remain flexible to the needs of the group and individuals

Sense of control and efficacy



For [staff](#):

- ☐ Involve staff in action planning and responsibilities for how to manage the current and on-going situation regarding the transition.² This should be based on what is necessary to do (and what can be put on hold) and who has the capacity, knowledge and skills to do the task.
- ☐ Review workload with staff on a regular basis to ensure it feels manageable
- ☐ Support staff to reflect on past practice that is relevant to the current situation e.g. supporting transition for new pupils; differentiating work for a range of needs; focusing on executive functioning, metacognition and self-regulation
- ☐ Provide information to staff on how they can support pupils (see e.g. [Tips for Educators](#))
- ☐ Ensure staff are aware of vulnerable pupils who may require additional support

For [pupils/families](#):

- ☐ Contact parents to find out about significant changes to the child's life during the period of time away (e.g. bereavements, illnesses). You may already be aware of these things in your ongoing contact with pupils and parents. Support parents with the transition, e.g. sharing [this link](#) with them (Back to School toolkit).
- ☐ Share a detailed, step-by-step plan with all members of the school community regarding the transition process and how it will be carried out before it happens: what will be the same and what will be different. Where possible, provide explanations about why things have changed (e.g. around government guidelines in previous section). This will allow pupils to feel in control of their own actions, as they will know what they need to do and why:
 - Staggered arrivals/finishes or weekly timetable to show when pupils will be in school
 - Where they will be spending their day and which members of staff they will be with
 - Timetable of the day, including breaks and how often they will need to wash their hands
 - Arrangements for break times and lunch times and moving around the school
- ☐ Where appropriate and possible, involve pupils in designing new ground rules. These can be reviewed regularly to ensure that they work well and consider whether they need to be adapted as circumstances change
- ☐ Support and teach pupils to identify their thoughts and feelings and review strategies that have helped them regulate these
- ☐ Support pupils to reflect on/ review previous learning and identify skills that support their learning

Stay connected



For [staff](#):

- ☐ Provide staff with opportunities to come together as a staff group to reconnect with each other
- ☐ Consider setting up smaller groups of support or buddy systems for formal check-ins
- ☐ Encourage informal peer support, whether in person or virtually

For [pupils/families](#):

- ☐ Ensure students have opportunities to [socialise or play together in groups](#)
- ☐ Complete group activities, or plan activities where individuals produce something that becomes a group product (e.g. tree made of

² Openness and transparency of information sharing and participation in decision making were facilitative factors in previous returns to school following pandemic (Braunack-Mayer, Tooher, Collins, Street and Marshall, 2013).

handprints, drawings for a display

- ☐ Show the pupils that you want them there and are happy to have them back, e.g. by smiling at them, greeting them warmly, asking about how they are and what they have been doing
- ☐ Set up buddy or peer mentoring systems
- ☐ Promote opportunities for networking and collaborative activities
- ☐ Involve and listen to individual pupils to identify key strategies/people
- ☐ Provide information to staff about [attachment and trauma-informed approaches](#) – e.g. by sharing the information presented in this document or requesting training or resource packs from the [Virtual School](#)

Cultivate calmness

For [staff](#):



- ☐ Encourage everyone to be open and honest about feelings and provide space for them to do this. Acknowledge that everyone will have good days and bad days, and that this is ok.
- ☐ Remind staff of coping strategies that they can use (e.g. see [how to take care of wellbeing during a crisis](#) and www.justtalkherts.org)
- ☐ Consider making ‘wobble’ rooms or other safe spaces available for staff
- ☐ Signpost staff to other avenues that they can access support from

For [pupils](#):

- ☐ Be open and honest about feelings; acknowledge that everyone will have good days and bad days and this is ok. Reassure pupils that all feelings are ok. Take the lead from children regarding whether they want to talk their feelings and experiences.
- ☐ Provide daily opportunities for pupils to complete an emotional ‘check in’
- ☐ Talk about ways to manage emotional distress (see [here](#))
- ☐ Provide a space that pupils can go to when they feel distressed (e.g. quiet corner of the room, pupil ‘wobble’ room), with a way to identify to staff that they need to use this space (e.g. a ‘time out’ card or hand signal) and access to calming activities
- ☐ If a pupil is distressed, use scripts such as those from Hertfordshire Steps or [emotion coaching](#) to help them acknowledge and understand their feelings. Respond clearly and calmly, and consider the reasons underlying the behaviour to unpick next steps, as behaviour is a form of communication

- ☐ Build regular times for calming activities into the school day (e.g. mindfulness), as well as opportunities for physical activity (inside on the spot or outside). Staff should engage in these activities and act as good role models
- ☐ Have posters/information about emotions around the classroom. These could be printed off in advance or designed by pupils
- ☐ Encourage pupils to think about what has been helpful for them in calming during times of stress or worry (e.g. things to help calm, like reading or art)

Remain hopeful




For staff:

- ☐ Have space to reflect on how staff (as a collective staff group and individuals) have coped with the changing situation up until now
- ☐ Encourage individuals to identify personal strengths and resources used to manage and how these can be used to support in the future
- ☐ Consider as a school or individual staff level what changes you might like to make moving forward based on your learning during this different time
- ☐ Set goals for the short term and long term: make sure goals are realistic and broken down into clear steps to make them achievable (see e.g. <https://woopmylife.org/>)

For pupils:

- ☐ Use some of the learning time to work on a project, like raising money for a good cause or doing something positive for the local community. This could incorporate a number of aspects of academic learning in a less demanding way
- ☐ Talk about the positive things pupils have learned about themselves (e.g. coping skills, working together as a family)
- ☐ Focus on strengths, both in the way that staff feedback to pupils and by helping pupils identify strengths in themselves (e.g. what they are good at, what do they feel proud of). Consider qualities (e.g. kindness, teamwork, perseverance) over skills (e.g. good at times tables, good at phonics).
- ☐ Help pupils to identify and notice the good things around them (e.g. gratitude journal, reflection card)
- ☐ Support pupils to make goals for themselves that are clear and achievable
- ☐ Provide opportunities for pupils to consider positives that happened during the situation, like acts of courage or kindness. For example, 5k for heroes, clap for carers, volunteers to get food/medicine, people making/donating PPE, local heroes/individual key workers (e.g. parents). This could also include additional positives that arose from people spending more time at home, such as spending time with the family, learning a new skill, finding a new hobby, impact on climate



Psychological Principles of Transition

Psychological principles informing this document

This section will briefly explain the psychological ideas and theories that underpin this document, to explain the rationale for the focus on these aspects of school. It is important to note that this is only a very brief overview of these ideas. If you would like more information about these, please speak to your contact EP³.

Different experiences require a differentiated response

Schools will need to consider how they can most effectively convey clear and appropriately differentiated messages to the various staff and student groups within the school community⁴. All children and staff will have had different experiences of the period of self-isolation which may affect how they feel about returning to school. This may be influenced by how safe or happy they felt at school or home, and whether they experienced ill health, bereavement or other challenges during lockdown. Some will feel relieved that there appears to be progress with relaxing the measures, and others will be anxious about being around more people or concerned about the workload that this could potentially bring. There will be complicated emotions around this transition back to school and all these feelings are valid. It will be important for school leaders to acknowledge that there is no simple or 'correct' way to feel or solution for managing at this time. It will also be important for schools to gather teacher and pupil perspectives on transition as these will differ⁵. A [screening tool](#) may be useful to identify pupils who require additional support at this time.

Transition is an important process that needs time

Even though change can feel uncertain and uncomfortable, the transition process can provide important opportunities for the shaping of an individual's identity⁶. It is not a one-off event. Trying to minimise the length and challenges of the transition period may be less beneficial than recognising the significance of this experience for all involved. It is important to participate in the transition process at a considered pace and to give permission to yourself and others to take time. Allowing students to make their own meaning and fully participate in this transition process could be aided through recognising the importance of relationships and discussion during this time and taking a child-led, flexible approach.

Relationships are fundamental to emotional well-being

Teaching and learning do not happen in a vacuum. They happen between people (staff and pupils), with interactions and relationships forming a key part of that. It is important for the emotional wellbeing of both staff and students to feel connected with others and have a sense of belonging in school. Relationships at all levels should be focused on, including staff-staff, student-student and staff-student.

³ See also the [Recovery Curriculum](#) for an overview of key principles

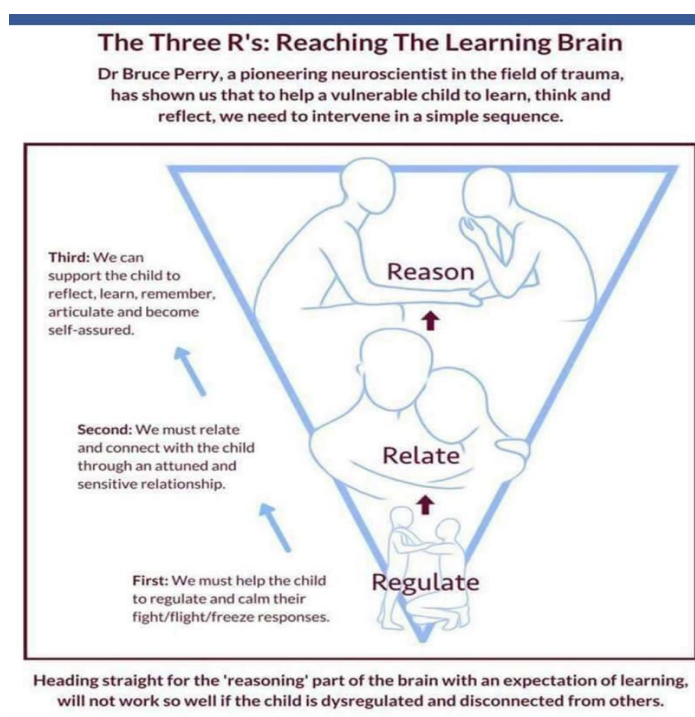
⁴ Hill, Michie, Scott & Sutton, 2020

⁵ Bailey & Baines, 2012

⁶ Crafter and Maunder, 2012

People need to regulate and connect before they can learn

Before CYP can learn or reason, they need to feel regulated and connected⁷. The diagram below outlines this process and is based on 'The Three Rs' theory by Bruce Perry.



Emotional experiences need to be validated and understood

Validation of emotional experiences is important to help children and staff normalise and understand their reactions and be supported in regulating their emotions. Dan Siegal uses the phrase 'name it to tame it'.

People need to feel safe, effective and in control

Lockdown removed the sense of agency for many people. Therefore, it will be important to consider⁸ how a feeling of being in control can be reintroduced to staff and students. A sense of safety is also required to help people feel calm in the school environment and ready to learn and connect with others.

Resilience protects against risks and builds hope

Resilience is an important concept for schools to consider as it is something they can directly influence. Definitions of resilience focus on individuals overcoming stress/adversity in their lives, having good life outcomes despite negative experiences, or being less vulnerable to risks. Resilience is not a trait that is solely down to the individual person: the situation someone is in and the people around them can contribute to the process of someone being more or less resilient. Resilience can be supported by close relationships with competent caring adults; effective schools and communities; opportunities to succeed; beliefs in self; and positive interactions with the world. It is a term that can be used for everyone, not just those who have been through 'extraordinary' circumstances.

⁷ Dr Bruce Perry; as cited in Beacon House – regulate, relate and reason.

⁸ Based on Hill et al. (2020) and Cherry et al. (2020)



Transition Support for Staff



Sense of Safety: Staff

Have a clear health and safety plan

This should be based on:

- Government⁹ and Local Authority advice
- Risk assessments which take into account staff concerns
- Discussions with governors and staff
- Information from Unions



Sense of Control and Efficacy: Staff

Support staff to practice compassion for themselves and others

Staff should be encouraged to be kind to themselves, to not overthink what they have or haven't done, or what didn't go well. It is important to have self-acceptance and understand that everyone makes mistakes and that we can move forward from them. This should also be true regarding other people. Staff should be supported to recognise that people would have done the best they can under unprecedented circumstances; that there was no clear guidance on how to behave/ what's best to manage the situation; and very little time for planning. Finding compassion for self and others for having to manage such a challenging situation is key to reaching self-acceptance and acceptance of how others may have managed the situation. See: [How to Practice Self-Compassion: 8 Techniques and Tips](#)

Involve staff members in decision making

Staff should feel involved in and informed of the decision-making process. Even when decisions are likely to change, information about how this is being thought about can help. Staff will feel heard if there are channels for feedback and if that feedback is responded to.

Updates should be communicated regularly with staff, so that they feel informed and involved, with the senior leadership team being a visible presence at this time. They should acknowledge what staff have gone through in this difficult period and value what they have done. Ongoing acknowledgement and praise of their efforts and valuing their support will be important too, especially in this period of transition, but also ongoing.

One of the challenges for SLT may be that decisions are having to be made quickly and things change daily. In this case, it is important to be transparent with all staff members that this may be the case with regards to some decisions and that the need to respond to fast moving situations could mean that it may not be possible to include all staff group with all decision making but that there is a clear rationale for this and the leadership team is open about this process.

⁹ <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/key-findings-how-the-dfe-thinks-schools-can-safely-reopen/>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020> ; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-the-wider-opening-of-schools-from-1-june/planning-guide-for-primary-schools>

Support staff to draw on skills they already have

The current pandemic is not a situation that anyone had encountered and had to deal with during our times. However, many of the coping strategies staff would have used in the past for many issues such as managing anxiety, dealing with attachment or trauma and differentiating work to support the needs of different students will be the same.

Therefore, encourage staff to make connections between the skills and resources they already have and how these can be transferred to the current situation (e.g. relationships with students, differentiation to meet gaps in learning, creativity in adapting the curriculum). Staff teams should start with using what they have that works well and then build on it (if it works, do more of it).

When we are in 'stress mode' or are functioning from anxiety (fight/ flight) – we can forget what we have learnt and already know as the amygdala is in charge of the situation and it is harder to access learning or long-term memory. Providing staff time to reconnect in their own self using known strategies such as relaxation/ breathing techniques, connecting with others, sharing experiences and 5 Ways to Wellbeing will support them in reviewing the situation and remembering that they already have useful tools they can use to support the children in the school but also colleagues.

Review Workload

Check that workload feels manageable for staff. Avoid 'business as usual' messages as these don't acknowledge the emotional and cognitive impact of working in a pandemic. Workload should be reviewed in supervision with line managers.

During times of uncertainty, anxiety tends to be heightened for people and capacity levels can be lower than the usual as the brain is focusing on using its' resources for survival mode. It is important to be realistic about expectations and what people may be able to produce while managing their own anxiety or other feelings relating to loss for example. Similarly, those who may be experiencing shame and guilt if they did not work in the school environment during the pandemic for any reason – may want to prove their worth and work harder than usual or what is needed. Managing realistic expectations and communicating this to staff is paramount in creating a safe and secure environment for people to function effectively but also to feel that they can share their concerns with their manager if they feel they are not coping and need additional support.



Stay Connected: Staff

Acknowledge the different needs of staff members

Staff will be returning to school with very different experiences of their time during lockdown, both in relation to work and their personal lives. Some may have experienced bereavement or ill health during this time. Others may have felt anxiety over health issues and work risks, or stress due to work pressures. Others may have continued to be present at school, teaching children of key workers. There may be mixed feelings about the work they have carried out or been asked to do during the time of school closures. This could include feelings of guilt, anger, loss, isolation, numbness or sadness. It will be important for all staff to have time to reflect on this together and to reconnect as a staff team.

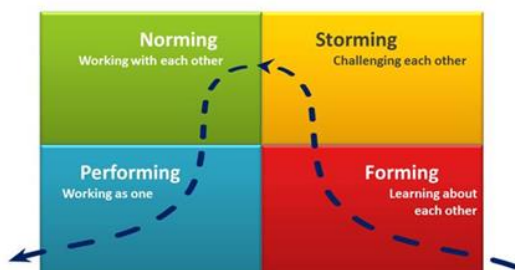
Help staff to connect with leaders

The connectedness between staff and leaders will be important for staff to have a sense of belonging in the school. This can be supported through regular communication and check-ins from those members of staff to those that they manage (see previous, as well as the section on supervision).

Team leaders should consider the key aspects of high performing teams when considering how to build team resilience:

- Psychological safety – team members should be supported to take risks without feeling insecure or embarrassed
- Dependability – team members should feel that they can count on each other to do work on time
- Structure and clarity - goals, roles and plans for the team are clear
- Meaning of work - the work is meaningful and personally important to team members
- Impact of work – team members believe that the work they are doing matters and makes a difference

Provide time to connect again as a group



Time away from each other may mean that the experience of the group will be different to what it was before Covid-19. A group which was originally performing well as a team, may find itself in a forming stage again (coming together) and may experience conflict as people adjust to the group and start to regain an identity and way of working together again¹⁰. Anxiety as a result of Covid-19 may lead the group to operate in more defensive

¹⁰ Tuckman, 1965

ways¹¹. For example, by seeking one person to take the responsibility of the group, engaging in fight-flight behaviours or setting up pairs within the group. Understanding how the group is functioning may help to resolve and work through any issues (the contact EP can help you to apply psychological theories to group experiences).

Provide opportunities to receive support from each other

Peer Support

Staff will benefit from informal opportunities to support each other in their work (e.g. through being encouraged to use the staff room, using buddy systems and having space in staff meetings to discuss how they are doing). Senior leadership may need to model this in themselves too, to promote a culture of seeking help and supporting each other. It is important to support a culture of self- and group reflections, acknowledging that teaching as a profession is something that you are continually learning about and improving upon, while recognising that this can be a challenging process to go through.

Supervision

Staff will benefit from access to individual or group supervision to provide a safe space to explore needs relating to professional practice

- Some schools may have coaching relationships set up, which is a specific type of supervision. Other school staff may have experienced different forms of group or peer supervision. One example of a peer supervision model is a [solution circle](#) which has clear steps to follow over a 24 minute period for each problem presented.
- A funded evidence based model of peer supervision is also available as part of the [Level 2 MHL training](#) provided by the Strategic Leads for Mental Health in School.
- Further information about how to establish individual or peer supervision in schools is available from the Educational Psychology Service. This includes information on the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant training and group supervision taking place in 2021.



¹¹ Wilfred Bion – Basic Assumptions



Promote Calming: Staff

Staff need to feel well-regulated before they can support the pupils to feel regulated. This means that staff will need opportunities to process their emotions and engage in strategies that soothe them and help them to cope. Information on how they can do this is provided in the [Coping and Wellbeing Guide](#).

It would be helpful to engage in regular staff meetings and do emotional 'check-ins' with staff to see how they are coping and to offer additional support where required.



Hope: Staff

Provide opportunities to consider post-adversarial growth

Even though change can feel uncertain and uncomfortable, the transition process can provide important opportunities for the shaping of an individual's identity. Encourage staff to reflect on any ways in which they have grown or experienced positive aspects during this difficult time. This could be done by introducing questions such as: What have they (individually) and you (collectively as a group) learned from the experience? What has changed, and what would you like to continue doing going forward?

The [post-traumatic growth inventory](#) can also be used to support reflections. This explores concepts within the following domains:

- Appreciation of life (e.g. time spent with family during lockdown)
- Relationships with others (e.g. community spirit)
- New possibilities (e.g. use of technology)
- Personal strength (e.g. maintaining personal wellbeing during lockdown)
- Spiritual change (e.g. appreciating the small things)



Transition Support for All Students



Sense of Safety: Pupils

A sense of safety is important as without feeling safe, children will not be ready to fully focus on school and being ready to learn. It will be helpful to highlight to children that events that have this much impact on the community are rare.

Support understanding of health and safety requirements

Pupils may need support to understand or follow health and safety requirements about how to keep themselves and each other safe

- Share age-appropriate information about the reasons for [social distancing](#)
- Where this is in use, share information about use of PPE equipment
- The rules should focus on what the children should be doing, rather than what they shouldn't be doing (e.g. instead of 'no hugging', give them alternatives for greeting others). They should be use simple and clear language and there should not be too many of them, to support pupils remembering them
- Plan [curriculum and play activities](#) which can be carried out in a safe way

Maintain routine

Routines make people feel safe. Obviously that routine will look different to how it did before the lockdown, but it will still be important to think carefully about what can still be kept the same to reduce the amount of disruption as much as possible (e.g. physical environment, staff members). This includes in the short-term and longer-term. Longer-term for example, you may decide to keep class teachers and/or support staff consistent for the pupils for the first few days back in September, the first half term or even the whole next academic year. For schools where you mix up the classes each year, you may decide to keep the children in the same class.

- Plan clear routines, share these in advance, include phased returns, with gradual increase in structured routines
- Provide predictable routines through the provision of visual timetables at a whole class level and, where applicable, at an individual level as well
- Be explicit about what is new and what is different and explain why, where possible. This will help them to make the connection between the two and reassure children as there are things that they can hold onto
- Set clear expectations for students. This can be supplemented by the use of timers, now and next boards and providing information about the number of questions to answer or sentences students are expected to write, for example
- Support families to manage sleep/ wake routines and gradually return these to normal prior to starting at school again. Encourage them to talk about things they enjoyed at school and have fun activities to look forward to when they get home, spending time together as a family
- Ensure clear communication to families and use social stories for those who need them

- Prepare children who have remained on site for the arrival of others.

Create structure

- It will be important to consider how to convey clear messages to all members of the school community about expected strategies, providing clear guidance and 'how to' rules rather than generic guidance¹². For example, rather than dirty tissues in your pocket, ensuring that clean tissues are kept in one pocket with dirty ones in another (or in the bin). Ensure there is a clear structure and expectations for everyone including staff, students, parents and visitors
- Consider providing a flowchart for individuals who may start to feel unsettled and want to share their concerns, who they can go to for support¹³
- Intentionally create protective factors in the educational environment as students return.
- Be clear about the location of rooms, people and activities, including when and where lessons/meetings will happen (being explicit about physical safety)



Sense of Control and Efficacy: Pupils

Set boundaries

- Boundaries should be clear and explicit, so that pupils know what is expected of them, but this should be done in a nurturing and supportive way. It may be helpful to review with staff the behaviour/emotional regulation policy and [principles of nurturing school environments](#) which underpin this. Flexibility and understanding should be incorporated throughout the support, with staff having patience with minor difficult behaviours. Gradually expectations could be returned to normal as children start to cope better and adapt
- Boundaries should be realistic and achievable, with an understanding that children are unlikely to be able to manage as well as before
- Flexibility and reasonable adjustments may be required if pupils are having a difficult time managing

Provide time as a group to reflect on experiences, both good and bad

It will be important to acknowledge and value what children have learnt during this time, even if this is not learning typically covered on the school curriculum (like baking or hoovering) or something that was not set as a learning task (like finding out about the Amazonian rainforest). Highlight how these things (or the qualities they used/learned to do these things, like kindness or perseverance) can be transferred into classroom learning. It will also be important to acknowledge how difficult the situation has been for everyone – they all lost something (e.g. contact with friends and wider family), even if they gained things too (e.g. more time with parents, more time to do things they enjoyed). See the [resources section](#) for specific reflection activities that can be included in the curriculum or during form time.

¹² Hill et al. (2020)

¹³ Cherry et al. (2020).

Recognise and remediate gaps in learning

Despite many schools offering virtual teaching and providing learning resources to parents, it is more than likely that many students will have missed a significant amount of learning during lockdown. Staff will need to focus on what the children have learnt (and what they have forgotten), rather than what they expected the children to learn. This isn't about 'catching up' – all pupils stopped their normal learning in the same place at the same time, and learning is not a competition but a journey of progress. In the longer term, assessments will be required to gather data to inform differentiation and lesson planning. Allow a period of reengagement before completing any formal assessment.

Provide reassurance

It is important to meet the children where they are now, and not where they were or where you expect them to be. Celebrate the wins, however small they may be – focus on the positives.

Some students may be anxious that they have fallen behind in their learning and that the time missed cannot be recouped. Therefore, it will be important for staff to provide consistent messages of reassurance to all students, e.g. that it is your job to help them with their learning and you will do your best to support them with that like you always have. Additionally, it may help some students if schools could provide them with a clear strategy or road map as to how they are going to support them to get back on track with their learning. In particular, students with SEMH needs reintegrating following absences may have concerns over 'feeling behind' and a pressure to catch up¹⁴.

Adapt teaching approaches accordingly

Some helpful ways to do this may be:

- As much as possible, incorporate fun and creative activities, even if this means not going straight into the normal curriculum learning
- Consider how students' individual talents / strengths / interests can be fostered and developed. There may be some extra-curricular activities or lunchtime clubs available or, if a student has a particular preferred subject, they may be interested in providing peer mentoring to other students
- Highlight achievements by providing specific, meaningful praise to students. Praise is thought to be most effective when it is given unexpectedly. Feedback should be clear and focus on the positives. There should be regular opportunities for an adult to check-in with pupils to ensure they understand what they are doing
- Setting up the first few lessons to revisit previously learnt information (e.g. through the use of a whole-class mind map). This not only refreshes students' memories, but also provides a 'hook' to which new learning can be connected to previously learnt information. For examples, see the book 'Mind Mapping for Kids' by Tony Buzan. Activities should be designed to involve low threat but high engagement.

¹⁴ Preyde, Parekh & Heintzman, 2018

- It may be appropriate for teachers to set low-stakes tests (e.g. multiple choice) to find out what pupils know to guide their planning. This should be communicated to the pupils.
- Map a plan to help students to make their learning journey concrete so they can see their individual steps to take
- Ensure learning is meaningful and that students understand the rationale for what they are learning (the 'why') – relate it to everyday life
- Support students to set their own, realistic SMART targets, ensuring that progress measured against self and not others
- Tasks should be clearly structured and broken down into steps
- Allow pupils choices in activities where possible
- It is likely that pupils will find it more difficult to concentrate. They should have frequent, short and purposeful learning breaks (e.g. asking a student to do a task for you (taking messages, collecting items). These could incorporate movement or mindfulness, for example. See [Big Book of Calmers](#) / Energisers for ideas for sensory breaks.
- Ensure that children have enough opportunities for physical movement (e.g. maintaining opportunities for play (break and lunchtimes), accessing free 30-minute workout sessions from The Body Coach on YouTube, Wake & Shake etc.) or other forms of exercise (e.g. daily mile, yoga)

Focus on executive functioning, metacognition and self-regulation (EMS)

We need to ensure children and young people are ready for learning again before 'carrying on as usual'. In order to support this, it may be more appropriate to focus on teaching children key learning skills which they can use in many situations instead of knowledge. Research has shown that teaching that focuses on executive functioning, self-regulation and metacognition has an impact on longer term learning outcomes (progress, academic achievement)¹⁵.

Executive functions are cognitive processes that help us to organise and manage our ability to maintain focus on a task. They are controlled by the pre-frontal cortex of the brain and can be thought of as the management system of the brain or 'conductor of the brains orchestra'. Executive functions are fundamental to enabling metacognition and self-regulated learning to happen.

The three core executive functions are seen as:

- **Control** – including response inhibition and self-control whereby you resist temptations and acting impulsively as well as interference control allowing for selective attention and cognitive inhibition

¹⁵ <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-executive-function-skills-for-life-and-learning/>
<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit/meta-cognition-and-self-regulation/>

- **Working memory** – the ability to hold numerous pieces of information in mind while performing complex tasks. This incorporates the ability to draw on past learning or experience to apply to situation at hand or project it to the future
- **Cognitive flexibility** – including thinking outside the box, seeing things from different perspectives and quickly and flexibly adapting to changed circumstances

Executive functioning and metacognition skills can be explained to children in a child-friendly way by using characters and stories to represent the skills. Children could also create their own characters, so they are personalised and individual to them which may increase their relevance, understanding and ability to remember the skills and strategies associated to them.

Metacognition is about the way learners **plan** to undertake a task, **monitor** to check progress and **evaluate** the overall success of a task. It is not just about ‘thinking about thinking’; it is about changing and adapting a specific way of thinking and purposely directing their learning.

Self-regulation involves individuals applying strategies to alter their cognitive, motivational, affective or behavioural reactions in order to help them achieve their goals and be ready to learn (e.g. to work independently, stop impulses, calm themselves down and to problem solve etc.)

The executive functioning, metacognition and self-regulation skills of CYP may have been affected by the Covid-19 lockdown. For example, emotional control could be affected due to the stress and fear of self-isolation and lack of connections with family and friends; sustained attention could have been influenced by having more frequent breaks and distractions when learning at home; flexibility may be impacted by the number of abrupt changes that have occurred in the past few months and so on. See the [resources section](#) for information on how schools can support teaching on executive functioning, metacognition and self-regulation (EMS).



Connectedness: Pupils

Create an inclusive ethos

- Think about how to create smaller communities within the larger school community (especially in larger secondary schools). Consider weekly check in, check-up and check out¹⁶. For example, a [coaching circles model](#) used in a school in Leeds included:
 - Each Monday, students check in with a small group, supported by an adult
 - On Wednesday, they check up together
 - On Friday they check out before going home for the weekend
- Staff should model the behaviour they want to see in others: on return to the school or setting, it will be important for staff members to model a sense of community to support students to develop and maintain attachments. Using communal language such as ‘our school’, ‘our project’ will help to develop a feeling of social connectedness and belonging.

¹⁶ Cherry et al. (2020)

- Ask children who have remained on site to help with the planning and decision making. Perhaps plan a welcome back event

Prioritise relationships

Children will need to talk and interact with others to start to make sense of their experiences, e.g. talking to an attentive adult about what it was like for them in 'lockdown' and potentially ask questions they didn't feel that they could ask their parents.

Interactions with peers

Students are likely to have concerns over interactions and loss of friendships following time apart¹⁷. Therefore, it will be particularly important for students that schools focus on ways to reestablish these connections.

- Play and fun are important to heal and move on. There will be children who have not had peers of a similar age to play with and families will have had different resources at home to play with as well. These opportunities will help to rebuild (and possibly repair) relationships, to help children feel relaxed and in control and allow them to process what has happened (e.g. situations they encountered or the ways others behaved)
- Provide peer to peer programmes: to help the students reach out to each other and facilitate connections, e.g. buddy and befriending schemes, which can support children to build friendships and a sense of belonging
- Use Circle Time or Tutor periods to:
 - Promote a collective understanding of how to support each other
 - Encourage small acts of kindness
 - Start to rebuild friendships
 - Consider students' views, thoughts and feelings about what has happened, both positive and negative. This should include their experiences of social interactions such as friendships being on hold or being included/left out of online interactions.
- Focus initially on fun things that the children can do
- Engage students in extracurricular / out of school activities: activities and games could be provided in order to re-establish relationships between peers and staff, possibly with some flexibility around school hours
- Support students through peer conflicts: relational approaches that are supportive rather than punitive would benefit both staff and students' understanding of emotions and possible causes for challenging behaviour. This could include the use of Restorative Approaches
- Model friendship skills for new starters in the Early Years¹⁸
- Educate children about the virus to address potential bullying
- Ensure you let children know why pupils are not back to let them know that they are safe

¹⁷ Preyde, Parekh & Heintzmann, 2018

¹⁸ Peters, 2003

Interactions with staff

- Prioritise creating and maintaining relationships with children and young people through greetings, individual conversations, calmness and warmth (verbally or non-verbally)
- Have regular check-ins with pupils about their hopes and worries to normalise their emotions and manage expectations. Be optimistic about the future but also realistic.
- Develop the use of areas in school to increase interaction among students and staff. This could involve facilitating discussions on various health and mental health related topics pertinent to the crisis
- Provide additional pastoral care for those who require it, either individually or in small groups. This might include opportunities to leave the classroom if students become overwhelmed, or having access to an identified key adult who is available if they need to talk
- Build relationships or reconnections with key adults: for some children and young people, it may be beneficial to assign a specific staff member (mentor or key adult) to support their transition by establishing trust and rapport. Ensure that staff who are supporting the most vulnerable children and young people in school are emotionally stable and resilient
- If a member of staff is not able to return to work yet, it would be helpful to provide a simple explanation and offer reassurance about the adult's wellbeing

Provide nurturing and trauma-informed support

Trauma-informed approaches for schools aim to be supportive for all children: what is helpful for those who have difficulties will be beneficial for all. Providing a nurturing environment will enable children and young people to develop their social and emotional skills, mental health, and their resilience. The diagram below shows how schools can do this:



The following general strategies can be used in the classroom:

- Offer kindness and comfort and ask students what you can do to help
- Keep students involved and included. Give children a voice and listen to them

- Provide a safe place to talk and distraction activities if students are not able to talk
- Watch with curiosity and empathy. Behaviour is a form of communication and careful observation can help the adults to understand how the student might be feeling, particularly when they have not yet developed the vocabulary or language skills to express themselves clearly. Be curious about what the child's behaviour might mean
- Build trust with the pupils – be honest and don't make unrealistic promises (e.g. 'you will not catch the virus at school')



Sense of Calm: Pupils

Encourage pupils to think about their feelings

- It will be important for schools to prepare for anxieties which may arise amongst staff and students. For example, anxiety about leaving the home as a safe space and spending time within the community¹⁹. Provide a place to share these (e.g. worry box).
- Provide opportunities for emotional check-ins. Some example resources include:
 - <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/emotional-check-in>
 - <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/sentence-starters>
 - <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/emotion-wheel>
- Pupils should know someone that they can speak to at school. Get them to name one adult that they can talk to about their worries. They should know how they can speak to someone if they need to
- This picture book on worries related to Covid-19 may be helpful: <https://en.calameo.com/read/000777721945cfe5bb9cc?authid=Xu9pcOzU3TQx>
- Nottinghamshire EPS have also produced [two stories](#) on their website related to 'The Little Elf' about missing out on events and to discuss feelings about returning to school.

Have a plan to respond to pupils who are dysregulated

If a child is engaging in difficult behaviour, it is important to:

- Remember that all behaviour is a form of communication
- Avoid taking the behaviour personally
- Try and remain calm, taking a few deep breaths if needed
- Tentatively acknowledge how the pupil is feeling without assuming you know what they are feeling or why (as there will be a range of emotions and reasons for these), e.g. using the Hertfordshire Steps strategies or principles of [emotion coaching](#)
- Use positive language, e.g. telling them what to do rather than what not to do
- Do not ask 'why' something happened, instead focus on 'what' happened. It may be that they are unable to tell you in the moment, and this needs to happen once the child is calm.

¹⁹ Hill et al., 2020

Engage students in calming / self-soothing strategies

Environmental adaptations

- Quiet rooms / safe spaces
- 'Wobble' rooms available for staff and students²⁰
- Consider providing the opportunity to take time out breaks for all students
- Worry box/monsters for children to draw or write about their worries

Times of transition

Transitions (e.g. between classes or before or after breaktimes) can be a source of stress for many students. It may be helpful to consider the following points in order to cultivate a sense of calmness during these times:

- Pre-transition, consider the use of:
 - Countdowns / time announcements – both visual and verbal
 - Cueing students into the change using music and dimmed lighting²¹
- During transition, consider the use of:
 - Calming music
 - Synchronous or somatosensory movement (e.g. marching, jumping jacks, deep breaths)
- Following transition, consider how to:
 - Spend time welcoming the students back into the classroom
 - Make use of emotion regulation strategies in the classroom such as calm corners, regulation stations and relaxation resources

Calming strategies

Calming strategies can be taught to pupils through staff modelling then trying that strategy together. Pupils can have planned opportunities to use these in the day (e.g. after lunch) and be encouraged to think about when else they can be used. Examples include of calming and self-regulation strategies can be found in the [resources section](#).



Hope: Pupils

Notice adversarial growth²²

Many people who experience traumatic events report positive changes. It is felt that people can develop new understandings of themselves (e.g. their strengths), the world they live in, how they relate to others, the kind of future they may have and have a better understanding of life. Pupils should be supported to think about any growth that might have taken place as a result of their experiences. This can be supported using a tool such as the [post-traumatic growth](#) inventory which explores the following areas:

- Appreciation of life (e.g. time spent with family during lockdown)
- Relationships with others (e.g. community spirit)

²⁰ Cherry et al., 2020

²¹ Perry, 2020

²² Post-traumatic or adversarial growth is a concept first described in 1999 by Tedeschi and Calhoun (2009).

- New possibilities (e.g. use of technology)
- Personal strength (e.g. maintaining personal wellbeing during lockdown)
- Spiritual change (e.g. appreciating the small things)

There are a couple of examples here regarding activities around hope, [hope clouds](#) by Young Minds and a [hope box](#) by PAPYRUS.



Targeted Support for Pupils

Planning support for pupils

This section provides specific guidance for different groups of pupils who are likely to require additional transition support.

Vulnerable groups

There are a number of pupil groups who are likely to require additional support for transition due to their experiences of the pandemic or their particular educational or social needs. Known vulnerable groups include:

- Children with Special Educational Needs: in particular, those with autism, mental health needs, and social and emotional needs.
- Those with current or previous social care involvement, including those who are looked after, adopted or on the edge of care

These pupils should already be known to the SENCo, Mental Health Lead or Designated Safeguarding Lead. They will require ongoing monitoring and support during the lockdown and transition process which should include: regular liaison with parents and carers, adapted home learning or in-school provision and separate group or individual provision planning (based on safeguarding and SEN planning frameworks already in place at the school).

School leavers/starters

Pupils who were due to finish school this academic year and/or start at a new school in September will require targeted transition support. This should build on the usual practice of schools for transition (e.g. providing information to students to prepare them for the change, making contact with new students, marking endings). It should also provide space for pupils to acknowledge what they have missed and to provide remote or socially distanced opportunities to mark endings.

Children who have been bereaved

For those children who have been bereaved, please see the document written about bereavement. If you need another copy of this, please contact your link EP. The EP service can also offer additional support during crises and sad events, see here for contact details: <http://www.thegrid.org.uk/info/healthandsafety/critical-incident.shtml>

While that document was aimed at supporting specific individuals around bereavements, there will be few school communities who will not be impacted upon by bereavement, and it is essential that this is recognised²³. It may be appropriate to hold a remembrance service to mark and celebrate their lives, although you will have to consider whether this will re-traumatise people. A remembrance event could also focus on the positive aspects of the pandemic, e.g. clap for carers, celebrate the achievements/resourcefulness of pupils out of school, as well as a time for organised reflection and collective meaning making.

²³ <https://marymered.wordpress.com/2020/04/14/five-ways-to-help-children-heal-when-schools-reopen/>

Identifying other pupils who may require additional support

There are likely to be pupils who are not in the identified groups above whose experience of the lockdown period has affected their social and emotional wellbeing adversely. There are a number of factors that may increase the vulnerability of pupils:

- Those with a history of low or non-attendance
- Those registered or known to be young carers
- Ethnicity, e.g. the BAME community have a higher risk of infection from Covid-19 and those from China/other Asian backgrounds may have experienced racial abuse
- Information about engagement in home learning
- Those with pre-existing medical conditions or those where family members have one, including those who are shielding as they are in a vulnerable group
- Those whose parents are keyworkers (whether they have been attending during the closure or not)
- Those who are already vulnerable from previous experiences (e.g. bereavements, parents losing jobs or separating)

Schools will need to liaise closely with parents/carers, and where possible, with pupils to find out about the experience of pupils to determine whether any additional support is required. This could be explored through:

- Phone calls with parents (e.g. teachers/form tutors taking on a group of parents)
- A questionnaire to all parents
- A questionnaire for pupils before/on return to school.
- A RAG rating (red, amber, green) for all children upon their return to rate level of concern and identify those who will need additional support. This should be regularly monitored to see if children present more/less concern over time.
- Observations of pupil behaviour on returning to school (see table below)

The resources section includes some example [screening tools](#).

Transition support for pupils with autism

Children with autism may find it particularly difficult to understand and adapt to the routine or process and express their thoughts and feelings about the experience. Therefore, they are likely to need additional considerations and support.

Information from SASS

The Specialist Advisory and Support Teachers for Speech, Language, Communication Needs and Autism have produced a pack for schools which contains advice, guidance, ideas and resources to help families and professionals support children to transition successfully back to schools and other settings. This includes:

- Checklists for supporting transition for pupils in Early Years and Year 6
- Resources for reflecting on lockdown
- Home preparation for transition, including social stories for the following scenarios
 - Going back to school
 - Hand washing
 - School is different
 - Safe to go to school
 - Wearing a mask
 - We will be going back to school sometime
- Resources and useful links

Please contact the service for this information if you haven't already received it. The team have planned a tiered response to school support which is outlined [here](#).

AET Recommendations

The Autism Education Trust (AET) [recommends](#) the following be put in place for pupils with ASD following the changes related to Covid-19:

- Positive and constructive relationships with parents, carers
- Home-school sharing of information important to increase consistency
- Strategies to be co-constructed e.g. transition pack, social stories
- Involving pupils in the reintegration process
- Identifying and addressing triggers for feelings of anxiety
- Use of social stories
- Providing prompt cards for procedures / key people
- Allowing time to adjust to physical and sensory environment
- Creating daily checklists to ensure students have the correct equipment for the day.
- Identifying and addressing triggers for feelings of anxiety
- Providing prompt cards for procedures / key people
- Create daily checklists to ensure students have the correct equipment for the day
- For those moving schools, providing a transition pack with information and materials – in age and ability appropriate format (see the [AET transition booklet](#)).

Further resources

The following websites have a number of resources to support CYP with autism to transition back to school:

- [Reachout ASC](#): Visual resources with symbols to help different elements of transition
- [AET Tools](#) to support teachers through home learning and return to school
- [Transition lapbook](#) – visual to help with moving on
- [AET Sensory Environment Audit](#)
- Social stories and talking mats focused on returning to schools:
<http://www.starsteam.org.uk/coronavirus-resources>
- How to make your own [digital stories](#) to support transitions
- Free training on [preparing autistic and SEND children for going back to school](#)

Support for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs

There will be children who already had known social and emotional needs prior to Covid-19. It is likely that for students with SEMH needs, there will be an increase in need upon returning to school, meaning that many students may need more support than they did before²⁴. Equally, children who were previously coping may now not be, and it will be necessary to support those children and identify the causes.

Social communication and emotional regulation needs

Some students may have social and emotional needs which relate to social communication or executive functioning difficulties (e.g. associated with diagnoses of autism or ADHD). They will continue to require support to develop emotional regulation and social skills to be successful in learning and relationships. See sections on [autism](#), [emotional control](#) and [executive functioning](#).

Trauma and attachment related needs

Social and emotional needs can occur as a result of early attachments or experiences of trauma or bereavement²⁵. Sadly, some students may have experienced additional trauma as a result of the lockdown and pandemic. This may have included exposure to domestic abuse, increased parental mental health difficulties or family bereavement. Trauma informed models of support will be particularly important for these students.

Relational and trauma-informed approaches

PACE model

Dan Hughes identified principles that adults can use to connect with children and young people (CYP), including within the school environment

- **Playfulness:** letting CYP be as they are, joining them where they are now
- **Acceptance:** normalising emotions, providing affirmations
- **Curiosity:** entering into their world, exploring what their perceptions are; walking with them. It focuses on what happened to the child, rather than what is wrong with the child
- **Empathy:** understanding and experiencing things as they are understanding and experiencing them

For more information on PACE, see the [resources section](#).

Emotion coaching principles

Emotion Coaching is an evidence-based strategy for helping children and young people to understand the different emotions they experience, why they occur, and how to manage them. During this challenging time, COVID-19 can enhance strong emotions in children and young people, therefore it is vital to promote their mental health and wellbeing by supporting them to manage their emotions and behaviours.

²⁴ Preyde, Parekh and Heintzman (2018)

²⁵ More information on attachment is available from the school contact EP or the Virtual School



There are four steps to emotion coaching:

1. Recognising the child's feelings and empathising with them
2. Validating and label the emotion the child is feeling in the moment
3. Set limits (if necessary)
4. Problem-solve: identify the feelings that gave way to the problems; identify more appropriate alternatives; agree possible solutions the child could try if the situation occurs again

For further information, see [here](#).

Attuned principles and resources

It is important for supporting adults to be attuned to all children, especially during this time of uncertainty and change. Attunement describes how reactive a person is to another's emotional needs and moods. A person who is well attuned to a child or young person will respond with appropriate language and behaviours based on the other person's emotional state. This will involve providing time, actively listening and providing undivided attention, free from non-judgemental or intrusive questions. Attunement and having secure relationships are not just crucial at home. Children and young people spend a lot of their time with school staff and it is important that they feel understood, 'tuned in' to and able to effectively articulate and make sense of their feelings, thoughts, hopes and beliefs with a few key adults and within the safety of the school walls.

The EPS has guidance and resources for a variety of attuned principles including attuned drawing, attuned play and attuned story writing. These can be found in the resources section [here](#). Please contact the EPS if you would like more information on this.

Mental Health needs

83% of CYP reported their mental health difficulty had worsened during lockdown (Young Minds Survey). For example, children may have developed anxiety as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. An estimated 15% of parents/carers report that their child would be too afraid to leave the house²⁶.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

COVID-19 appears to have had a big impact on those already suffering with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) in terms of their focus on hygiene and handwashing rituals. The return to school may well heighten students' concerns about becoming ill or infecting others. Children and young people displaying OCD behaviours will need understanding and additional support.

²⁶ Waite et al, 2020

The following resources may help support children and young people with OCD:

- [“Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. A Young Person’s Self Help Guide”](#) by Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Partnership Trust.
- [“What to do when your brain gets stuck: a kid’s guide to overcoming OCD”](#) by Dawn Huebner.
- [Advice from Young Minds](#) for young people experiencing OCD in the pandemic.
- [OCD UK](#) Specific tips about dealing with Coronavirus can be found at <https://www.ocduk.org/ocd-coronavirus-summary/> and <https://www.ocduk.org/ocd-and-coronavirus-survival-tips/>

Anxiety

Some children with pre-existing anxiety issues may feel particularly worried about returning to school. An [Anxiety Toolkit](#) is available in the Healthy Young Mind in Herts website. The following strategies may also help:

- Discuss with the young person and their parents any specific worries they may have. For example, they may have worries around getting on with friends, falling behind with their work, being in a noisy classroom. Address these specific issues, if necessary, through the normal Assess, Plan, Do, Review process
- Ask the young person what they think will help
- Develop robust transition plans between schools, phases and classes so that the young person is prepared for change
- Where necessary, modify the environment or make other adaptations to reduce sensory overload, e.g. allow the child to wear headphones; provide a safe space for the child if they feel overwhelmed; and provide supported activities for times of the day that provide particular challenges such as a Lego club during break time
- Provide structured opportunities for the young person to develop their relationships with adults and peers so they build their support networks and develop their sense of belonging
- If the young person is beginning to school refuse, consider adapting some of the usual routines that trigger negative emotions to make it easier for the child enter the school building. For example: consider a later start time or using a different entrance; have a “meet and greet” with a set routine; encourage a peer to accompany them to school to distract them from negative thoughts on the journey; introduce a visual timetable so they know what is going to happen throughout the day and point out any unexpected changes in advance
- Explicitly teach young people [how to manage their emotions](#)
- Explicitly teach young people [how to solve problems](#) and help them feel better able to cope
- Books that may help support children and young people with anxiety.
 - [“What to do when you worry too much: a kid’s guide to overcoming anxiety”](#) by Huebner & Matthews (for primary-age children)

- [“My anxiety handbook: Getting back on track”](#) by Gallagher, McEwen & Knowles (for secondary-age children)
- [Helping your child with fears and worries: 2nd edition: a self-help guide for parents](#) by Cathy Creswell (for parents)
- [Overcoming your child’s shyness and social anxiety](#) by Willets & Creswell (for parents)

Separation anxiety

It is likely that after being at home for a number of months, some children will feel more worried than usual about separating from their parents / carers. Separation anxiety is a normal stage of development for babies and toddlers but most children outgrow it by around 3 years old. However, some older children continue to be anxious about leaving their parents / carers. Children may worry that they or their parents will not be safe or be able to cope if they are separated from each other.

More information about separation anxiety can be found at

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/get-help/anxiety-information/young-people-and-anxiety/separation-anxiety/>.

The following can help children with separation anxiety:

- Having a transitional object. “A transitional object is something that can be used to remind the child that even though they are separated from their parent, they can continue to hold them in mind and feel their connection with them”²⁷. Examples of transitional objects include: a bracelet; photo of the parent; a kiss drawn on a hand; perfume sprayed on the child’s shirt; a note in the child’s lunchbox; a cuddly toy; an small item of clothing belonging to the parent
- An organised “Meet and greet” from a key person at the start of the day that follows a regular routine. Having a key person can help the child cope because they serve as a substitute attachment figure in school
- When dropping the child off, the parent should:
 - pass the child to a trusted adult
 - have a clear routine for saying goodbye to their child (e.g. a kiss on the head and a clear goodbye) so the child knows exactly what is going to happen.
 - reassure the child that they will see them later
 - give the message they believe the child cope
 - be kind but firm, and not give in if the child becomes upset
 - Leave quickly without drawing out the goodbyes or “sneaking away”.
- A “soft start” to the day where the child does a fun activity with the key person prior to going into class. Alternatively, consider a “busy bag” for child to do when they first come into the classroom to distracts them from their worries.
- A visual timetable so the child knows what will happen and when they will see the parent again.

²⁷ Inside I’m hurting” by Bomber, 2018, p116

Good books to read to children to explore separation anxiety include:

- [The kissing hand](#)
- [The invisible string](#)
- [Owl babies](#)
- [The kiss box](#)
- [Huge bag of worries](#)

Selective mutism

SMIRA has produced some information regarding selective mutism and coronavirus, here: <http://www.selectivemutism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Covid-19-Advice-to-Parents-and-Carers.pdf>

Teach emotional control

- Use one-to-one or small group sessions to explicitly teach children how to manage their feelings. These should include: helping children identify their emotions; labelling their emotions; identifying what triggers anxiety and other negative emotions; how thoughts, emotions and behaviours link together; strategies to calm themselves down and cheer themselves up.
- **Resources** to help schools teach emotional control include:
 - [Zones of Regulation](#). The EP service can provide training if required.
 - [Starving the Anxiety Gremlin](#). There are different books for different age groups.
 - [Think Good, Feel Good: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook for Children and Young People](#) by Paul Stallard.
 - [CBT Toolkit for Children and Adolescents](#) by Liz Phifer.
- Children with anxiety may need support to implement self-calming strategies during the school day. Adults working with these children should carefully monitor them for increasing levels of anxiety. When they notice the child beginning to become dysregulated, they could encourage the child to use strategies they have been taught
- You may consider introducing a calm box. This is a small box with an assortment of card to choose from. Each card should describe an activity that can be used to sooth heightened anxiety. When adults notice the child is getting anxious, they should direct them towards the calm box and give them a choice of which activities they want to do. (For example, "You could breathe deeply or go outside and walk around the playground for 2 minutes. Which one?"). An adult should get along the child to do the soothing activity together. After a while, the child may begin to let the adult know when they need to use the calm box.
- Staff could ask anxious students to identify specific coping strategies to use in situations which typically trigger anxiety / overwhelming emotions
 - Identify the most common triggers of anxious and negative thoughts. For example, not being able to do the work
 - For each trigger, encourage the child to generate a list of coping strategies they could use in each situation to calm themselves down

If I can't do the work...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can ask my TA or teacher for help. They will be pleased I asked. • I can look and see what other children are doing • I can look at the board or books to give me ideas about what to do.
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- It may be helpful to role-play some of these situations so the child feels confident they can implement the coping strategy in each situation.
- The child may want to put each Trigger and Coping Strategy on a card on a key ring to carry round with them and refer to throughout the day.
- Regularly review the triggers and coping strategies. During reviews, talk about whether the child managed to use the coping strategy. What helped them to use it? Was it difficult to use it? Why? Would a different coping strategy be better?
- Some worries are realistic, in which case, the best approach is to encourage the child to problem solve. (See below)
- Some worries are unrealistic. The best way to deal with unrealistic worries is to encourage the child to test them out
 - Try to find out exactly what the child is worried about and what they think is going to happen. (e.g. "I'm worried about the teacher asking me a question and getting it wrong")
 - Try to find out exactly why that would be so bad for the child. (e.g. "Then they'll all think I'm thick")
 - Test out the worry.
 - Help the child to consider other points of view. For example, you could ask: What makes you think this will happen? What evidence is there that this belief is true or not true? Can you imagine anything else could happen? What would you think if this was happening to someone else? What would (another child) think if this happened to them?
 - Help the child conduct experiments to put their fear to the test. E.g. Keep a record of every time someone gives an incorrect answer in class during a day. Rate from 0 to 5 how stupid I think that person who gave the wrong answer is.
 - Give lots of praise when you see the child "having a go" at facing their fears instead of avoiding them.

Teach problem solving and help young people feel better able to cope.

- Teach children and young people problem-solving skills which they can apply when facing difficult situations or when trying to overcome a problem. The stages in problem solving are:
 - Identify what the problem is
 - Generate a list of possible solutions
 - Evaluate the pros and cons of each solution
 - Decide on the best solution
 - The young person may need support to implement the chosen solution effectively. This could be done through role play or rehearsal with an adult.

- Once they have implemented the solution, reflect with the young person on what has gone well and what they could do next time that might make the solution even better.
- Get children to identify their strengths and successes. This can be done by asking children to think about situations they have dealt with well in the past. What personal qualities did they show in these situations – Bravery? Persistence? Calmness? Curiosity? Creativity? etc. The “[How many positives](#)” activity on the Young Minds website, encourages children to think about their strengths.
- Get children to identify the resources they have around them that will help them resolve problems (e.g. teachers, parents, friends, books, the internet, apps etc). The “[Find your feet](#)” activity on the Young Minds website helps children to identify who can help and support them.

Provide additional support for social relationships

- Staff may need to monitor the relationship experience of children with SEMH needs to see how connected and successful they are in their friendships. This can be through observation and discussion with the child.
- Social opportunities may need to be planned so that children can be successful (e.g. through facilitating social interaction, providing structure to the interaction, or teaching social skills at a separate time). A range of resources to support social thinking can be found [here](#).

Support from external professionals

SENCos/Mental Health Leads can request additional support and advice for pupils with social and emotional needs from the EP Team, ESC Outreach Team, Specialist Advisory and Support Service or Mental Health Leads (see [table of support](#) for further information). The Schools and Families Advice Line (0300 777 0707; hpft.spa@nhs.net) is also available for advice around:

- General concerns around mental well-being, coping strategies and self-care
- How to support children and young people in relation to the Covid-19 outbreak (e.g. understanding, frustration, anxiety etc). Supporting mental well-being during the transition back to school and the anxiety around this uncertainty
- Support and advice for education staff around their own mental well-being
- ‘Whole school approaches’ to supporting mental well-being
- Specific anxieties (around COVID-19/self-isolating measures, transition between year groups, developing and maintaining relationships, fear of failure, low self-esteem or aspirations, trust issues, social anxiety, etc.)
- Phobias (animals/insects, specific food stuffs, specific objects, modes of transport etc.)
- Low mood
- Emotional regulation difficulties.
- Mild obsessive-compulsive difficulties that are starting to impact day to day activities.
- Low-level behavioural concerns
- Sleep difficulties
- Signposting to services and resources that may be helpful for supporting mental wellbeing.

School leavers and new starters

All schools will be in a position that from September, they will have new students on roll and students who would have left their school. There are processes that schools will usually go through to support goodbyes for school leavers and support new starters to feel ready for that transition after the summer holidays. Those transitions will look very different this year, due to the reduced time in school for all pupils, with some maybe not returning at all.

A [short document](#) was written by the Anna Freud Centre and aimed at parents. It talks about recognising and acknowledging the loss, validating their feelings, prioritising relationships, finding the opportunities in the loss and holding each other in mind.

Endings: school leavers

It is important that school leavers are provided with some kind of closure and proper opportunities to experience the ending, even if those are different to what they would have expected. This will depend on whether the students return before the end of the academic year. There are rituals that the pupils would have been expecting and looking forward to that won't be possible to do in the same way this year. It would be helpful to discuss what this might look like with the pupils beforehand, so they feel involved in the process.

Pupils will need to be reminded that transition and change are natural parts of life, and this is a positive move forward for them, rather than as a loss. They should also know that it is normal for them to experience either positive (e.g. happiness, excitement) and negative (e.g. sadness, worry, confusion) feelings during this time, as well as the impact of the additional stresses to that process. It will be important to validate their feelings and encourage them to share them with others.

You might like to get pupils to reflect on their time in the school. This could be something that they share with their current staff, along with the staff in their new school. Things they might like to consider are:

- Their best memory of the year
- What three things have they learnt this year
- What challenge have they overcome, and how did they do this
- Think of the special people at their school
- What they want to do in the future

Staff should encourage pupils to focus positively on the future, while avoiding giving promises that they are unsure they can keep. It is important to balance being open and honest with a sense of optimism about what is to come and managing anxieties.

As well as saying goodbye to their peers, it would also be a good idea for the teacher and support staff to give a form of goodbye, like a letter to the whole class or notes to individual children, or video messages.

Some goodbye sessions may need to be done virtually, such as a Celebration Assembly or newsletter to share achievements. A yearbook may also be possible, for example by getting each pupil to produce a message and collating that for those who are leaving into a book.

Schools could also support pupils to have virtual social opportunities with their peers to sustain these social networks. It may be necessary for some/all events to happen in September to say goodbye fully. For example, it may be appropriate to organise a goodbye session/prom etc to be held at the previous school in September. Students could be encouraged to write/draw goodbye messages to their peers, which could be collated into books (rather than signing shirts for example). It may be helpful to identify the pupils who will find this particularly difficult (e.g. those with a significant attachment to particular members of staff) and do additional things with them (e.g. [memory book](#)).

Beginnings: new starters

For any new starters, it would be helpful to ensure that there are easy ways for parents to get in touch, either through contacting their new class teacher/form tutor directly, or through having a dedicated email address to make contact.

Reception transition²⁸

Schools normally have robust transitions for Reception children that continue into September. The children would have probably had messages that things will be different for them after the summer holidays, and those with older siblings may have already been to the school they are going to. Obviously, the transition programme this term will look very different, and it is unknown what may be possible to do in September at this stage. Some things that could be helpful to do with children in Reception (or encourage their parents to do with them) include:

- Reading story books about going to school
- Parents doing walks to school and putting their school uniform on
- Pictures and video tour of the school building (e.g. entrance, toilets, cloakroom, playground, classroom, corridors) and key members of staff
- Engaging with parents: this would normally be done through home visits or parent sessions at the school, which are not possible at the current time. Instead, it may be appropriate to do phone calls or video calls with parents, to find out about their child and the parents' concerns. If the child has also attended a nursery setting, it would be even more important to spend time finding out about the child from them too. This information could include:
 - Sleep and energy patterns
 - How the child usually shows anxiety or distress
 - What helps to comfort/soothe them
 - What the child is motivated to do and play with and how they play
 - How the child manages with separation and how the parent would like to manage this
 - What helps the child/what supports do they need or might they need
- It may be appropriate to have a more gradual staggered start in September, for some or all children, e.g. self-registration and continuous provision will allow flexibility with

²⁸ Aspects of this have been taken from information from Northamptonshire Educational Psychology service, with permission

the separation and goodbyes with parents. Observe this and see how parents and children manage, and the staff being supportive and sensitive and showing warmth will be particularly important

- If children know each other (e.g. live nearby or attended the same nursery setting), it may be helpful to be flexible with groupings to take account of these
- Predictability and routines will be even more important, especially when children are still in the transition stage and settling into school. It may be appropriate to have more of a focus on child-initiated play initially to encourage them to get to know each other
- Although the children are young, it is still important to listen to them and provide them with opportunities to voice their concerns, e.g. through asking gentle questions, and acknowledge and validate their feelings (see [emotion coaching](#)). As children often show their feelings through their play, it will be important to watch for themes coming through this. Classic stories and fairy tales that reflect human experience of change and uncertainty, and explore what it feels like to find yourself in a new play, conquering fears and persevering through adversity may be a useful springboard for this, along with therapeutic stories (e.g. those by Margot Sunderland)
- A few useful links:
 - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/collections/starting-primary-school/1>
 - <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/10-practical-tips-for-school-staff-to-help-children-settle-when-starting-primary-school/>
 - <https://schoolleaders.thekeysupport.com/covid-19/safeguard-and-support-pupils/pupil-wellbeing-and-mental-health/coronavirus-supporting-transition-into-reception/>
 - Early Years getting to know you booklet: <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/pre-school-getting-to-know-you-booklet/>
 - The Resiliency Framework (https://www.boingboing.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Interactive_Resilience_Framework.pdf)
- For those children transitioning from Reception into Year 1, it may be helpful for them to have a more play-based curriculum (more like the EYFS) for the first half-term to a term.

Secondary school transition

Each school is its own community, with its own culture. This means that new starters will have to understand the ethos of the school and understand how it works. Well-managed transitions will support children to be able to cope with the change. It may be beneficial to consider how your school's usual transition programme can be enhanced. Some ideas to do this are outlined below:

- Introduce students to their new teachers or form tutors using video or other remote technology (e.g. emails, voice recordings, instant messaging, VLE) to help prepare students for the educational environment

- Offer affirmation messages (e.g. “we look forward to meeting you”, “our priority is to keep you safe” and “we will support you”)
- Offer virtual question and answer sessions for students
- Offer students a virtual tour of their classroom and school or setting and a floor plan
- Share photographs of key staff and key rooms with new students
- Create a ‘How To’ guide for the school, including information about expectations, rules and routines (including breaks and lunch times and timetables for the first week and term)
- Create an FAQ document for all students, particularly highlighting any new changes which will be coming into place following transition (e.g. new hygiene/social distancing measures)
- Get students to fill in information about themselves, such as their likes/dislikes, their strengths and what they think helps them in school, e.g. an ‘All About Me’ booklet
- Acknowledge and directly address students’ concerns. Contacting families or having virtual meetings can give an idea about what their concerns might be. Provide clear information about the type of support and strategies you plan to provide for the students on their return.
- Signpost parents/carers to resources which they can use at home with their children to reduce potential anxieties.
- Encourage parents to do practice school runs. If the child will be going to school on their own, start doing the journey together initially, followed by the parent being a short distance away and then later them doing the journey on their own.
- Ensure that you liaise with their previous school to identify vulnerable pupils who are likely to need additional support during the transition and upon their arrival to your school (e.g. those who have additional needs or have experienced emotionally-based school avoidance) to consider what their individual needs might be. It is likely that meetings will need to be held virtually between the feeding and receiving schools. These students will likely need additional steps to aid the transition process before September. Find out the child’s strengths, needs and what has been helpful for them in their previous school, so that necessary supports can be implemented straight away. These will need to be reviewed regularly once the pupil starts.
- Upon arrival or even prior to starting at the new school, you could consider using peer support/mentoring and hear from existing pupils (e.g. the current Year 7s)
- It may be more important to keep existing peer networks intact as much as possible when considering groupings. Provide opportunities for them to re-establish and get to know new peers
- Let them know what topics they will be covering initially. If possible, make this match up with what they have covered/were supposed to be covering in the feeding primary schools.

- Support students to identify checklists for what they will need (first day, week, then depending on timetable). They may need to be taught how to use things such as timetables and homework planners

Wherever possible, endeavor to involve students in the reintegration process and the school community so that they can experience a sense of agency and control over the process of rejoining school. For example:

- Provide students with responsibilities such as specific jobs or tasks
- Work with students to set their own targets and goals
- Involve students in the planning and implementation of activities to create a sense of community, and in planning social activities that create a sense of belonging. Communal language such as 'our school' or 'our project' is also helpful.
- Obtain the voice of children and young people in the school and identify what they feel will support them within the school environment.

Some helpful resources and links include:

- From the BBC: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/tags/zh4wy9q/starting-secondary-school/1>
- [Transition information and questionnaires](#) for children, parents and teachers from UCL
- Year 6 [transition activities](#)
- ['Be Awesome Go Big'](#) by Pixl
- Smart Moves transition booklets based on a resiliency framework can be viewed [here](#) and downloaded [here](#)
- [Year 6 worry cards](#)
- [Tips for students](#) infographic
- [Twitter thread](#) of activities:
- [The Transition Tool Box](#) – a resource for transition to secondary school
- The [National Strategies PSHE curriculum](#) has a section on changes

University transition

A 'Survive and Thrive' toolkit will be available for students making the transition to University. This includes a self-check questionnaire and information to support students to navigate independence and cope with the challenges of university life. It will be shared with schools in June 2020.

Additional Resources and Information

Activities to help children and young people reflect on experiences

Sentence starters

Use prompt students to complete the following sentence starters with peers.

- The hardest thing for me was/is.....
- A challenge I have overcome....
- A new skill I have learned...
- Right now I feel...
- What I hope for in the future...
- Things I have appreciated most about my family/friends....

To incorporate these discussions in a more natural way, set up an activity where each step of that task is accompanied by the question/sentence starter. For example, making a fruit salad:

1. Chop the strawberries. Talk with each other about what the hardest thing about lockdown was
2. Peel the banana. Share a challenge you overcame in lockdown.
3. Slice the apples. Talk about a new skill you have learned.
4. Chop the grapes. Discuss how you feel right now.
5. Add the juice. Talk about what you hope for in the future.
6. Eat the salad. Discuss what you have appreciated most about family/friends.

Sharing positive memories

- Share a [positive memory for each of five senses](https://www.pixl.org.uk/site/data/files/primary/BFB6D77D6E12174BDD2C6C89BC9AF04A.pdf)
- Create a lockdown capsule
- Activity booklets, such as:
<https://www.pixl.org.uk/site/data/files/primary/BFB6D77D6E12174BDD2C6C89BC9AF04A.pdf>

Whole class reflection activities

- Use post-it notes to create a visual display of lockdown reflections or 'reflect and sketch' for children who prefer to draw
- Create a class scrapbook of activities the children have been up to during lockdown
- Create group thank you cards for key workers in the local community
- Create a calm garden (filled with lots of arts and crafts) to have an area in the school to reflect about challenging aspects of the pandemic (especially if some people have died in the school community)
- Create wellbeing packs for vulnerable people that may be living alone, e.g. a grandparent. This may include writing a card/letter, painting on some rocks/shells, baking some biscuits (with smiley faces on), decorating plant pot which may have some soil and seeds inside it etc.
- Have a set day to really focus on wellbeing e.g. Wellbeing Wednesday, watch videos of good news stories and put posters around the school with positive messages and reflections etc.

- Create a reflective video (school diary) about what pupils (if permission to be on film) and staff are doing/learning at school during the lockdown.

Opportunities to reflect in the curriculum

- English: reflection on the experiences of characters in books
- Stories about change (e.g. The Very Quiet Cricket or The Very Hungry Caterpillar, or classic fairy tales): What changed? Why did the change happen? Was it good or bad?
- History/English: Learning about the Spanish flu and the differences between coping mechanisms and containment in 1918 compared to 2020
- Food technology: Create recipes using alternative ingredients (representing when there was a food shortage in supermarkets, e.g. flourless products)
- Geography/Science: Researching/discussing environmental benefits that have arisen from the lockdown e.g. increased cycling, less pollution etc.
- Art: Paint/draw pictures of activities/emotions associated with the lockdown
- PSHE: How to keep connected and (physically and mentally) healthy during lockdown
 - Recovery Curriculum: <https://www.evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum/>
 - Connect PSHE: <https://www.connect-pshe.org/approach>
 - Free PSHE activities: <https://www.chameleompde.com/>
- Media/ICT: Creating posters/videos spreading positivity during lockdown

Activities to help children and young people connect with others

It will be important for there to be a focus on play and fun initially, through activities that children can do in groups and encourage interactions. *Please consider this list of activities with your school rules regarding physical distancing in mind.*

Primary school activities

- Parachute games – children work together to bounce the ball within the parachute
- Long skipping rope games
- Hopscotch games
- Whole class dance or mindfulness sessions
- ‘Waking up the frogs’ – a blue blanket is placed on the floor with several ‘lily pads’ on it. Sleeping toy frogs sit on the lily pads. Tell the children its morning and you need to use musical instruments and sing a song to wake them up.
- Emotion charades – one child acts out a certain emotion and the others must guess what feeling is being portrayed
- Encourage children to say/write compliments or do something kind to a different peer every day
- Create and complete obstacle courses or mini Olympics events
- Plant seeds/flowers together in school and then look after these
- Make crafts such as dream catchers outside on the field
- Organise a joint scavenger hunt or nature walk on the field and list 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you ‘could’ taste etc
- Go on a treasure hunt. Create a map of the school and discover the hidden treasure.
- Work together to create a long picture display to put up in the school hall. This could be pictures to represent positive aspects of the pandemic and hopefulness (e.g. drawing key workers, photos, writing messages of support, doing handprints etc.).
- Discussions, e.g. ‘would you rather...’ (free download [here](#))

Secondary school activities

- Encourage random acts of kindness e.g. one a day
- Team athletics-based activities on the school field
- Minefield. Navigate an obstacle course blindfolded and be navigated by peers who can shout out directions
- Hot seat. Sit a student in the opposite direction to the whiteboard, facing the rest of the students. Write a word on the board and the class have to work together to describe the word using synonyms, definitions etc so their teammate can guess it.
- Share positive stories during lockdown e.g. things they have been creative with at home or helping grandparents with shopping etc
- Creating a school garden or calm area
- Create a yoga or mindfulness club at lunchtimes
- Create a school podcast/blog/vlog

Activities to help children and young people engage with learning

Environmental and skill support considerations

The EPS have created a 'planning for EMS intervention' document which provides environmental support and skill support considerations to develop executive function and metacognition skills, some of which can be used within teaching the usual curriculum. A few examples have been listed below but you can request further information by contacting the EPS. Most of these strategies may already occur within the classroom but it is important to make these explicit so children are aware of them and understand why they are using them (to increase certain executive functioning, metacognition or self-regulation skills).

Response inhibition

- ☐ Reduced level of noise or distractions
- ☐ Modelling
- ☐ Frequent positive feedback
- ☐ STOPP approach
- ☐ [Hunter and his amazing remote control](#) (focusing on the ability to pause)
- ☐ Comic strip conversations
- ☐ Self-talk
- ☐ Time out cards
- ☐ Simon-says games and turn taking games

Emotional control

- ☐ Developing a 'new' routine
- ☐ Checking in activities e.g. using 5-point scales
- ☐ Soft start
- ☐ Emotion coaching
- ☐ Anxiety mapping (see Hertfordshire STEPS training) to identify triggers
- ☐ Providing sensory breaks
- ☐ Mindfulness and mindful deep breathing
- ☐ [Zones of regulation curriculum](#)
- ☐ Psychoeducation around anxiety/emotions
- ☐ Sensory box/calm box
- ☐ Identifying the size of the problem (elephant or ant sized problem)
- ☐ Books such as 'What to do when you worry too much' or 'Volcano in my tummy'

Flexibility

- ☐ Visual timetable and using question marks for upcoming changes
- ☐ Providing as much routine as possible
- ☐ Providing reminders
- ☐ Using growth mindset language and principles
- ☐ Transition planning and transitional supports
- ☐ Developing self-talk
- ☐ Preparing for problems and how to overcome them e.g. [WOOP](#)
- ☐ Social stories about changes
- ☐ Relaxation/mindful breathing
- ☐ Books such as 'mistakes that changed the world', 'beautiful oops' etc

Working memory

- ☐ Visual/verbal prompts and cues
- ☐ List making
- ☐ Task sheets with instructions/reminders written down
- ☐ Mnemonics
- ☐ Precision monitoring
- ☐ Pre-teaching vocab
- ☐ Chunking
- ☐ Retrieval practice

Sustained attention

- ☐ Sensory audit of the environment, noticing sensory supports/challenges
- ☐ Visual/verbal prompts
- ☐ Lists
- ☐ Hooks using individuals' interests
- ☐ Providing frequent sensory breaks
- ☐ Awareness of time of day/level of energy/wider context and circumstances, e.g. covid-19 vs task requirement
- ☐ Chunking
- ☐ Hands on practical learning
- ☐ Variety of teaching mediums
- ☐ First...Next
- ☐ Timers
- ☐ Fidget toys/sensory objects
- ☐ Motivations (e.g. reward breaks)
- ☐ Scribing/alternatives to writing

Task initiation/planning/prioritisation/organisation/time management

- ☐ Visual timetable
- ☐ Lists
- ☐ Modifying the tasks/breaking it down
- ☐ Colour coding systems
- ☐ My learning intention worksheet (*speak to your contact EP for an example*)
- ☐ Prompt cards
- ☐ Know-Want-Learn (K-W-L) charts
- ☐ I don't understand cards
- ☐ Writing frames
- ☐ Timers and reminders e.g. phone reminders for secondary students
- ☐ Post it notes
- ☐ Sentence starters
- ☐ Pre-teaching
- ☐ Diary support

Goal directed persistence

- ☐ Task outline/providing a road map
- ☐ Modelling
- ☐ Menu of rewards
- ☐ Motivational interviewing

- ☐ PATH (Planning alternative tomorrows with hope)
- ☐ Gaining pupil voice
- ☐ Use of hooks

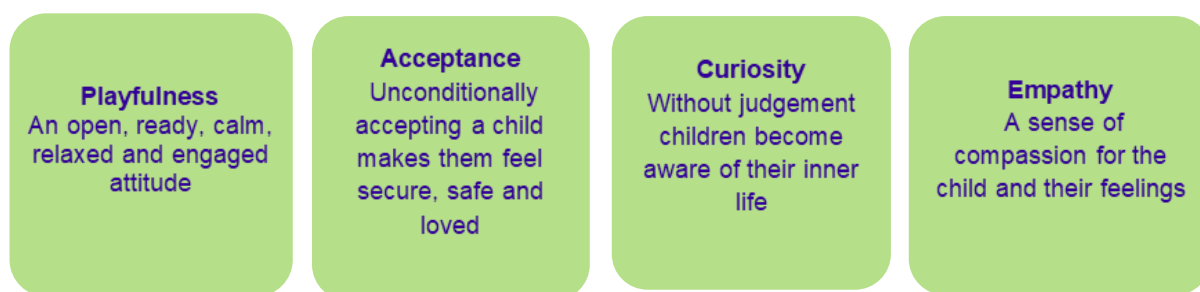
Metacognition

- ☐ Peer reflection
- ☐ Modelling self-talk when planning/monitoring/evaluating a task
- ☐ Ways in which my brain has grown
- ☐ Using metacognitive questioning e.g. What should you do first? What next? What resources do you need? How will you know when you've finished? How do you think you have done? Etc.
- ☐ Encouraging reflection/self-evaluation questions
- ☐ Encouraging pupils to have a 'bird eye view/drone view of the situation'
- ☐ Tick sheet for each subtask to monitor progress

Relational and trauma-informed approaches to support emotional regulation and connectedness

PACE

PACE focuses on the whole child, not just their behaviour. In using these principles, CYP experience feeling connected and secure, whilst the adult enables them to understand, make sense of, and manage their emotions, thoughts and behaviour. It is an approach which limits shame, promotes compassion and brings a sense of mutual support, strength and resilience. When an adult spends time with a child, demonstrating an interest in their inner life, they are helping to contain and regulate the child's emotions so that the child can learn to do this independently. Using PACE enables the adult to recognise the strengths and positive features that are often overlooked when presented with challenging behaviour.



These elements can be seen as underpinning characteristics of a relationship that raises children and young people's sense of safety and security.

Approaches to try:

Playfulness – can defuse tense situations effectively, as long as it is not perceived as teasing. It is important to judge the situation well and be confident that the child will respond in kind, without viewing your comment as a challenge.

Acceptance – if a child is upset or hurt, acknowledge their feelings, rather than telling them they are/will be fine. Accept where they are in the moment and name their feelings, for example, 'I can see you have had an argument with your friend and what they said has hurt you and made you feel angry'. This is more meaningful, allowing the child to explore their emotions and reactions.

Curiosity – always be curious about children, their interests and their lives, not just in times of need. Use this element as a way of developing your relationship and connection with the child.

Empathy – use phrases such as, 'I wonder...' to express empathy. This phrase also encompasses acceptance and curiosity, for example; 'I see you have pushed your work across the table. You seem angry and frustrated right now. I wonder if you are worried that the work is too hard for you'. By acknowledging their feelings and being present in the moment, you are demonstrating acceptance and empathy. Further, the latter demonstrates curiosity.

Emotion coaching/CONNECT model

This information has been reproduced with permission, from Northamptonshire Educational Psychology Service. The CONNECT model was developed by Dr Kirsten Krawczyk and Dr Sarah Modi, informed by the work from [Emotion Coaching UK](#). This information was adapted by Alison Gardner (Specialist Senior Educational Psychologist, Northamptonshire)²⁹.

Additional examples of this in practice have been added to support understanding. Training on emotion coaching can be provided by some trained members of the EPS, through the Emotion Coaching website and is also sometimes organised through DSPLs.

Check-in (with the moment and your feelings)

It is important to be aware of the different emotions you may be feeling before responding to the child. Think about how you are feeling about the current situation, notice any increased feelings of anxiety you may have and any behaviours that may result, e.g. hyper-vigilance regarding cleanliness, frequent watching of news etc. You might also notice that your body is reacting to this too. Young children are very good at picking up on emotional cues, even if they do not understand them. It is important to convey a sense of calm whenever you can by paying attention to your tone of voice, the words you use – young children need these to be short, easy to understand and kind, as well as notice and acknowledge their feelings.

Opportunity for teaching

Observe how your young child may be expressing their feelings through their behaviour. Babies and toddlers may cry more than usual and want to be held/cuddled. Slightly older children may regress a little e.g. have more toileting accidents, tantrums, difficulties with sleeping and separation. Some may talk about their fears, e.g. a member of the family becoming unwell. This will provide an important opportunity to model managing and naming feelings, to answer questions honestly to fit their level of understanding and to reassure. Notice your young child's emotional reactions and behaviours as communication and as an opportunity to connect and support them to learn ways of coping based on your observations.

Notice

It is important to be aware of the different emotions your young child may feel which will be demonstrated by their behaviour. Consider your child's perspective to help interpret how they might be feeling, name and acknowledge the feeling, notice how your child responds and pace your response accordingly. Babies benefit from mind-minded commentary - i.e. you speaking out how they might be feeling and why: *"I can see you are tired and maybe a bit grumpy, it must have been difficult to sleep with everyone being busy around you?"* etc. Consider too what they might need to calm, e.g. a cuddle, soothing tones, their comforter, a favourite rhyme, sharing a picture book, 'grounding' by using their senses to see, hear, smell what is going on around them, taking 3 deep slow breaths. This is how we support young children to self-regulate.

²⁹ References: Emotion Coaching UK: <https://www.emotioncoachinguk.com/> ; Gottman, J (1997) Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child: The Heart of Parenting. Simon & Schuster; Siegel, D & Payne-Bryson, T (2011) The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Proven Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind. Robinson.

Name and normalise

Name and normalise the feeling - "That's OK, we all feel a bit worried when things change." By doing this we are helping young children to recognise their feelings and acquire a feelings vocabulary.

Labelling	Empathising - validating
You seem worried / on edge / anxious I can see you're feeling sad I can tell you're furious. I wonder if... You look upset. You're irritated.	I'm sorry that happened to you, you must feel very... I would feel worried / anxious if that happened to me. I can see you get sad / irritated when that happens / when I do this. That would make me angry / cross. I understand why you got upset. It's normal to feel worried about that.

Empathise

The above is about empathising/'tuning in' to your child and by doing so helping them to gradually develop these skills for themselves. The adult contains the child's emotional reactions and supports them to cope with their confusing feelings, to make sense and to reassure. *"I can see you are feeling a bit scared but we can do things like wash our hands to keep safe."*

Consider setting limits

Routines and boundary setting are especially important at a time of change when things are uncertain. Young children and babies need the reassurance provided by simple, clear everyday routines that respond to their needs. Too many words and explanations can be overwhelming as well as hold little meaning. Routines that respond to their needs provide a sense of safety. Maintain consistency and a sense of rhythm. Reaffirm boundaries when needed. Young children's understanding is concrete and rooted in the 'here and now'. *"I wonder if you are upset because you can't play with your friends? Keeping safe is important for everybody, so let's pick up the Lego you have thrown on the floor and then we can go out into the garden."* Example scripts for reaffirming boundaries:

- "The rules are that we..."
- Stay in the playground, the field is far away and I can't see if you are OK
- Take the ball outside if you want to play with it. Something might get broken if you play inside with it.
- Doing that is not OK.
- You need to play in a friendly way. Make sure X has a turn too.
- Be sure to ask first before you borrow something from your friend.

Team-work-problem solve together

Here the adult and the child explore solutions to problems together. Families/parents/key carers are the most important people in the lives of babies and young children which will be further reinforced at this time. Use time together to develop social skills, communication and engagement, follow the child's lead, ask to join in, play simple games, take turns. Encourage self-efficacy by offering simple choices, *"Do you want to play with the big ball or the smaller ball?"*; *"I can see you are upset because you can't go to the shops. What do you want to do instead?"*

Be Attuned

Summarised below are three types of activities that can be implemented, using the principles of attunement.

Attuned drawing

Attuned drawing involves a supporting adult sitting alongside the child or young person and talking to them about any worries, thoughts or beliefs they may have whilst they engage in some drawing of their choice. The supporting adult should be attuned by being interested in the child and what they are doing and possibly asking some non-intrusive questions about their drawings. The adult should be non-judgmental of what the child or young person draws or communicates to them but should remain vigilant of any safeguarding issues that may arise in the drawings. Some children and young people find it easier to discuss their thoughts and feelings whilst they are doing something comfortable and familiar such as drawing, as well as not having to provide as much eye contact.



Attuned play

Play is extremely important for children and young people. It allows them to express, communicate and cope with their feelings in a safe way, process traumatic experiences and is crucial for optimal growth and development. Play can improve cognitive abilities, help build positive adult-pupil interaction, develop social skills with peers, build resilience and emotional literacy skills, enhance problem solving skills, reduce fear and anxiety, and much more. Some children and young people have difficulties in articulating their feelings and expressing their emotions; through play they can communicate nonverbally, symbolically and in an action-orientated manner to reflect their thoughts and feelings. Play is familiar and comfortable for most children and can be less intense than a face to face conversation, especially for children who struggle with social interactions and proving eye contact.



Play is not just for younger children; it is important for pupils at secondary school (and beyond) too. This may include symbolic and pretend play, outdoor and movement play, construction play e.g. using Lego or games with set rules including board games. Supporting adults can be attuned and provide a 'secure base' to children whilst they are engaging in play by:

- Providing their full attention. Observing what the child or young person is doing and saying, noticing their body language, expressions, tone of voice and being curious about their emotional state.
- Being non-directive and non-judgemental
- Engaging in empathic listening – Using skills of reflection and paraphrasing; seeking to show their attendance to the child or young person by reflecting back the key elements of what they said. Empathetic listening can lead to children feeling accepted and valued.



- Maintaining boundaries – taking responsibilities for keeping the child or young person, themselves and the room safe, being aware of their own limits, being clear and consistent with joint rule making, ensuring check ins happen regularly, making sure the space to play is appropriate and uninterrupted and managing positive beginnings and endings (especially during the pandemic which is already causing many abrupt changes and endings).

Attuned story writing

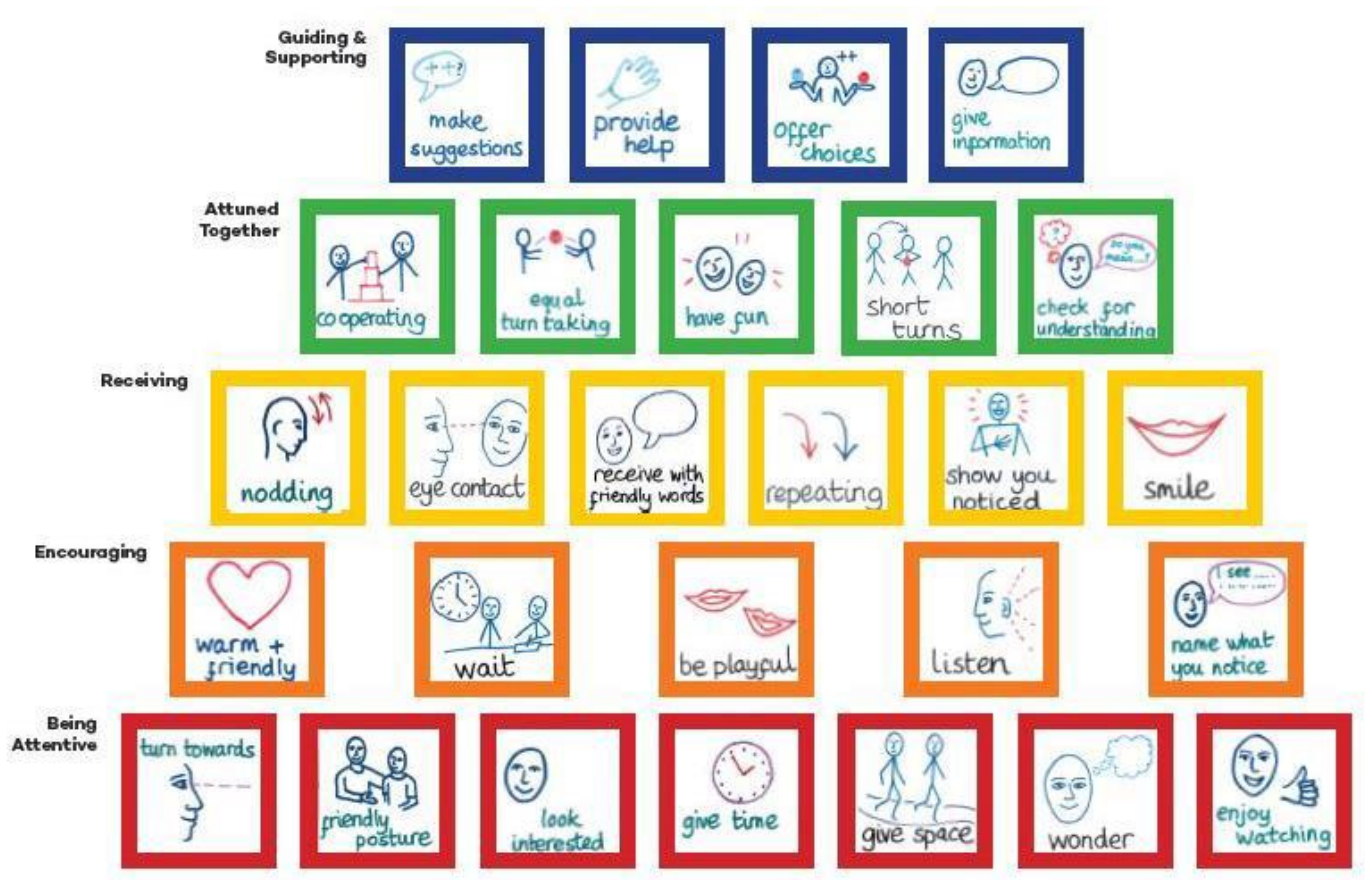
Attuned Story Writing uses principles of narrative therapy and psychodynamic theory to allow the children and young people to get some distance from any difficult experiences and explore feelings through other characters. The aim is for the child or young person to feel more empowered to make changes in their thought patterns and behaviour and therefore rewrite their life story for a future that reflects who they are, what their strengths are, and what their goals are, separate from their problems. This tool is for any child or young person who may be struggling with difficult feelings related to an adverse experience and can be implemented either in a 1:1 situation or a small group situation (with sensitivity to the members of the group).



The following steps should be followed in an attuned, collaborative way:

1. Through triangulation of information gathered from important adults in the child or young person's life as well as their own views, the emotional issue or difficulty that they are struggling with will be identified. It is important to be thinking of a list of feelings (not just sad, angry, scared, happy). Some examples are as follows: all alone, not belonging, left out, missing someone/missing someone so much that it hurts terribly, needing something or someone too much, panic, very frightened and so on.
2. Transform the literal into the symbolic, take the emotional theme that the child or young person is struggling with and put it into a different context from that of their actual life circumstances. In choosing a context, think of things, places and characters related to the CYP's hobbies and interests. Do not clutter the story with detail or wordiness.
3. Think of characters, a place and a situation that can provide a metaphorical context for this problem or issue. Present the main character as experiencing with the same emotional problem of issues as the child or young person.
4. Show the main character using coping strategies for the problem or issue similar to those coping mechanisms used by the child. Show how these coping mechanisms lead them into troubled waters or down the wrong road, which is self-destructive or destructive to others. Show the ultimate failure to that coping mechanism which results in the character reaching some kind of internal or external crisis in their life.
5. Show the journey from the crisis to the solution of the crisis. Beware of moving too quickly from problem to solution. There must be a journey, a bridge between the two.
6. Next comes the shift: usually as a vital part of the journey towards solution, someone or something appears in the story that helps the character to change direction and move on to a better coping mechanism or a far more creative way of dealing with the situation. The main character then successfully adopts a new behaviour, way of being or coping mechanism and feels a lot better. This alters his experience of themselves and others.

The diagram below displays key principles of attunement involving both verbal and nonverbal interactions. Small things can make a big difference when it concerns attunement.



Calming and self-regulation strategies

Grounding Exercises

When your mind is racing, grounding brings you back to the moment, bringing your focus back to what is happening to you physically, either in your body or in your surroundings. Grounding is very helpful in managing overwhelming feelings or anxiety.

1. The grounding chair

Sit down in a comfortable chair, with your feet on the floor. Close your eyes and focus on your breath. Breathe in slowly for the count, then out slowly. Bring your minds focus to your body – How does your body feel sitting in that chair? Touch the material on the seat, how does it feel? Next push your feet into the ground, imagine the energy draining down from your mind, down through your body and out through your feet into the ground.



2. Hold something and focus on it

Hold an object in your hand and really bring your full focus to it. Feel how heavy or light it is in your hand and what the surface texture feels like under your fingers.

3. Draw around your foot in your mind

Place your feet on the ground and in your imagination pick your favourite colour to draw an outline around each foot. Start at the heel and using your imaginary pencil slowly go up the side of your foot to your pinky toe and then make sure you draw around each toe and then go back towards the heel.

4. Get your energy out

Run up and down the stairs, dance around and do star jumps.



5. Take 10 slow breaths

6. Stop and listen

Notice the sounds you hear nearby – more your awareness of sound outwards and notice sounds in the distance.

7. Room search

Pick one broad category and search the room. For example, name everything in the room that's green.

8. Listen to soothing music

9. Hold/squeeze a pillow, stuffed animal or ball



10. Name 5 things you can see in the room

11. Name animals alphabetically

12. Write it out and then throw it out

13. Push against a wall

14. Savour a scent



15. Clench and release your fists

16. Think of the things that you are looking forward to in the next week

17. Hold your shoulders right up to the ears and let them drop

Repeat as many times as it takes to release tension.

18. Practice belly breathing

19. Observe your thoughts

20. Walk barefoot



21. Walk slowly

Notice each step.

22. Do some yoga poses

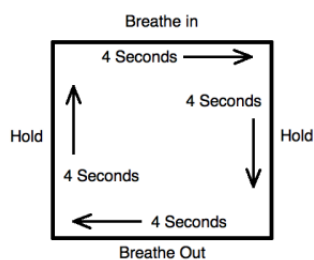


23. Heartbeat exercise

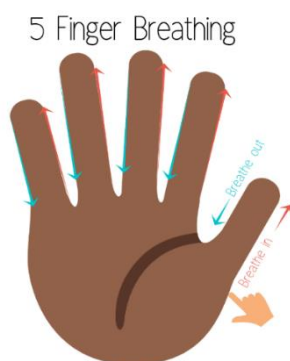
Stand up and do jumping jacks, place your hand on your heart and notice your heartbeat and how your breathing feels.

Other types of breathing exercises:

Box Breathing



5-finger breathing/hand tracing.



Further resources:

- Go Noodle <https://www.gonoodle.com/>
- [The Butterfly technique](#)

ELSA Resources

The [ELSA support website](https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/) contains a number of free resources that can support children to remain calm and focus on positive experiences.

- Just relax. <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/just-relax/>
- Take a calming strategy. <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/take-a-calming-strategy/>
- Calm down dice. <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/calm-down-dice/>
- Happy visualisation. <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/happy-visualisation/>
- Sunny Smiles. <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/sunny-smiles/>
- Warm Fuzzy. <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/warm-fuzzy/>

Resources for Resilience

https://www.r4r.support/?fbclid=IwAR0qCbX6yJdS28wIQv9Re9tIqk5iiKKUEh3P6buE8eLE_RLx2HfG3Qxoqc0

Childline Resource

[Toolbox](#) of strategies to calm yourself down.

Screening ideas for pupils

Gathering information from parents

Questionnaire³⁰

1. How is <<name>> feeling about going back to school?
Anxious ☐ Ok ☐ Excited ☐
2. How often does <<name>> have negative feelings about going to school because they are afraid of something related to school?
Seldom ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐
3. How often do you think <<name>> feels they would rather be with you than go back to school?
Seldom ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐
4. Since schools have been closed, how often has <<name>> engaged in activities with others, either in the house or online, to do something fun?
Seldom ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐
5. Since schools have been closed, how often has <<name>> been in contact with school friends?
Seldom ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐
6. How often does <<name>> have negative feelings about school (for example, scared, nervous, or sad) when you talk about going back to school?
Seldom ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐
7. How much do you think <<name>> would rather be taught by you, as parents at home rather than by their teachers at school?
Seldom ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐
8. How often has <<name>> engaged in the work set for them since school has been closed?
Seldom ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐
9. Does <<name>> know why they're feeling anxious about going back to school? Is it because they are worried about:

³⁰ Taken from http://ohs.oxon.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Coronavirus_to_Classroom.pdf

Gathering information from staff

Look out for changes in behaviour in the children³¹:

Changes in behaviour or emotion in Pre-schoolers	Changes in behaviour or emotion in School-age	Changes in behaviour or emotion in Adolescence
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acting out• Nightmares• Sleep disturbance• Regression• Clinging• Compulsive repetitive play	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bed wetting• Clinging• Anxiety• School refusal• Less emotional regulation• Withdrawal• Arguing / Fighting• Complaints of physical symptoms• Sleep disturbance• Event specific fears• Traumatic play or themes present in writing, drawing and pretending	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes in sense of identity, future, safety and connection e.g. diminished sense of future• Self-harm• Suicidality• Substance misuse• Conduct problems• School refusal• Withdrawal• Unusual sensory experiences or beliefs• Loss of contact with reality

Gathering information from pupils

Wellbeing questionnaire from ELSA: <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/back-to-school-wellbeing-questionnaire/>

Pupil Questionnaire³²

1. How do you feel about going back to school in general?
Anxious ☐ Ok ☐ Excited ☐
2. How do you feel about seeing you school friends again?
Anxious ☐ Ok ☐ Excited ☐
3. How do you feel about seeing other people at school again?
Anxious ☐ Ok ☐ Excited ☐
4. How do you feel about going back to school to see the teachers and be in lessons, learning again?
Anxious ☐ Ok ☐ Excited ☐

³¹ Source: Appendix 3 of *Promoting Resilience when Re-integrating Students and Staff post CoVid – 19* (City & Hackney CAMHS Alliance)

³² Taken from http://ohs.oxon.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Coronavirus_to_Classroom.pdf

5. How often do you have negative feelings about going to school because you're afraid of something related to school?
Seldom ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐
6. How often do you feel that you would rather be with your parent(s) / carer(s) than go back to school?
Seldom ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐
7. Since schools have been closed, how often have you engaged in activities with others, either in the house or online, to do something fun?
Seldom ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐
8. Since schools have been closed, how often have you been in contact with school friends?
Seldom ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐
9. How often do you have negative feelings about school (for example, scared, nervous, or sad) when you think about going back to school?
Seldom ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐
10. How much do you think you would rather be taught by your parents / carers at home rather than by your teachers at school?
Seldom ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐
11. How often have you engaged in the work set for you since school has been closed?
Seldom ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐
12. If you are, do you know why they're feeling anxious about going back to school? Is it because you are worried about:
Friendships ☐ Missing your parents ☐ School work ☐ Other ☐ _____

Questionnaire devised by Hertfordshire EPS (aimed at secondary school students)

1. How do you feel about returning to school when that happens?
 - a) Looking forward to it
 - b) Don't mind
 - c) Slightly nervous
 - d) Worried
 - e) Other. Please add
2. Write in a word or sentence how you are feeling about returning to school

3. What are you looking forward to about returning to school?
 - Seeing my friends
 - Getting back to lessons

- Seeing my teachers
 - Working towards my qualifications or exams
 - Keeping up with schoolwork
 - Enjoying learning
 - Being able to do sport and stay fit
 - Getting out of the house
 - It will help me feel happier and / or calmer
 - I think it will help me deal with losing someone close to me
 - Other. Please add.
4. When you think about returning to school, is there anything in particular that makes you feel worried?
- Having too much work to do
 - Having to get up early
 - Doing exams/retakes
 - Homework
 - Having less free time
 - Not being sure what being back at school will look like, e.g. how lessons will be organised
 - Wondering how we will revise/go over the learning that we have covered at home
 - Seeing friends again
 - Other. Please add.
5. What do you think the school can do to help make it easier to return to school?
- Keeping the same teachers/tutors
 - Having someone check how I'm feeling
 - Being able to have a break if I feel anxious/stressed
 - Additional time to reconnect with friends
 - Being told what will happen before we go back
 - Having less work in the first few weeks
 - Other. Please add.
6. Would you find it helpful for an adult to be available for you to talk to? Y/N
7. Do you have someone at school you feel that you can talk to about any issues? Y/N
8. What do you think you and your family can do to make it easier to return to school?

Coping & Wellbeing During Covid-19: A Guide for Staff and Parents

Understanding Psychological Responses

Everyone will be affected in some way by this pandemic. The experience will be different for each individual and may change from day to day and across weeks as people adapt to changing circumstances. It is completely normal for different people to respond differently, and it is okay for people not to feel okay. Reactions that people might experience include:

- Increased tiredness: due to the mental workload and additional stress and anxiety associated with Covid-19 and adapting to a changed situation.
- Feelings associated with loss (of routine, of important planned activities, or due to a bereavement): anger, sadness, low mood, shock, denial, numbness and moving between different emotions.
- Emotional effects of being in quarantine, which might include boredom, depression, exhaustion, avoidance, detachment from others, anxiety, irritability, insomnia, confusion, anger and helplessness.
- Job stress related to compromised ability to do the job, lack of control over work, reduced concentration, and blurred boundaries between home and work.
- Post-traumatic stress responses as a result of exposure to the news, actual experienced events, or feelings of threat: this may be noticed as changes in cognition, mood, arousal and reactivity; avoidance of certain situations; and intrusion of thoughts, images or memories.
- Positive effects such as renewed commitment to work, personal and professional growth, increased voluntary efforts, a sense of meaning and life and feelings of gratitude, strength, hope and love.

Healthy habits

There are daily supports you can put in place which will help to protect against some of the negative psychological impacts of the pandemic:

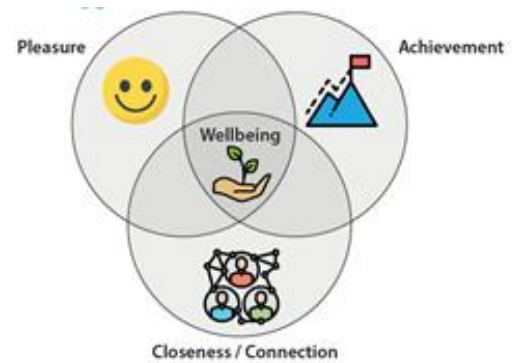
- Build structure into your day to maintain some routine, this could include a transition routine between home and work tasks.
- Aim to keep regular sleep and wake times and take other steps to maintain good sleep hygiene (<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/sleep-hygiene>).
- Allow yourself breaks in between work tasks.
- Maintain healthy food, drink and exercise goals.
- Reduce your exposure to the news, especially if this is something that causes anxiety: limit it to one or two times a day, at times when you are less likely to ruminate on information.
- Accept that things are out of your control and that they will not last forever. Focus on what you can control.
- Practice self-acceptance and have realistic expectations and standards for yourself – you can only be ‘good enough’.



Helpful Ways of Coping

Maintain balance in your life

Wellbeing comes from living a life with a balance of activities that give you feelings of pleasure, achievement, and closeness. Humans are social animals – we need connections to thrive and flourish. We would recommend trying to do at least some activities that are social and involve other people.



Five Ways to Wellbeing

The following are evidence-based strategies identified to support wellbeing³³:

1. Connect: Find virtual ways to spend time with family, friends and colleagues.
2. Be Active: Plan daily exercise outside or using online videos or other indoor exercise options.
3. Take Notice: Practise being mindful of your own body and the environment around you.
4. Learn: If you have extra time, use this to try something new or focus learning on your role (e.g. new technology, ways of teaching) or wellbeing.
5. Give: This could include practical support as well as offering encouragement, time and expressions of gratitude to others.

See <https://www.justtalkherts.org/media/documents/resilience-at-home-guide.pdf> for a checklist resource to help you incorporate five ways related activities into your days.

PERMA

A meta-analysis of research into coping identified 5 styles of coping and encouraged people to be aware of their dominant style but also explore other options for coping:

Positive emotion: spend time on healthy experiences and focus on positive things

Engagement: become immersed in worthwhile goals

Relationships: connect positively with others

Meaning: act with purpose

Accomplishment: achieve goals and manage setbacks

Psychological First Aid

Psychological First Aid³⁴ is an evidence-informed approach which has identified key features that are helpful for traumatic situations:

- Increase your sense of **safety**
- Stay **connected**
- Cultivate **calmness**
- Improve your sense of **control**
- Remain **hopeful**

³³ <https://www.mindkit.org.uk/5-ways-to-wellbeing/>

³⁴ <https://www.nctsn.org/treatments-and-practices/psychological-first-aid-and-skills-for-psychological-recovery>

Other coping resources

The *Mind* website provides useful information about how to cope with anxiety and self-isolation: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/> and <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anxiety-and-panic-attacks/self-care-for-anxiety/>.

The Anna Freud Centre has created a webpage with lots of examples of ways to manage feelings that people can use to get ideas: <https://www.annafreud.org/selfcare/>.

A menu of self-care activities can also be found [here](#)

Managing worries

It's important to note that everyone will be different, so here are some examples of ways that might help you to manage worries. Not everything will work for everyone. It is a good idea to think about what has helped you manage feelings of worry before and use those strategies as a starting point. Here are some examples to consider.

Practise identifying whether worry is 'real problem' worry, or 'hypothetical worry'

If you're experiencing lots of hypothetical worry, then it's important to remind yourself that your mind is not focusing on a problem that you can solve right now, and then to find ways to let the worry go and focus on something else. You might also use this tool with children if they are struggling to cope.

Practise postponing your worry

This means deliberately setting aside time each day to let yourself worry (e.g. 30 minutes at the end of each day).

Speak to yourself with compassion

Worry can come from a place of concern – we worry about others when we care for them. A traditional cognitive behavioural therapy technique for working with negative, anxious, or upsetting thoughts is to write them down and find a different way of responding to them.

Practise mindfulness

Learning and practising mindfulness can help us to let go of worries and bring ourselves back to the present moment. Focusing on the gentle movement of your breath or the sounds you hear around you, can serve as helpful 'anchors' to come back to the present moment and let go of worries. Activities for practising mindfulness can be found here:

- <http://www.safehandstinkingminds.co.uk/covid-anxiety-stress-resources-links/>
- <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/2268-mindfulness-for-parents>
- Apps such as Headspace, Calm and Smiling Minds
- Colouring and origami: <https://origami.me/>.

Sensory Strategies

Think about how you can use your senses to ground yourself in the present moment:

- Sight: looking at something calming (e.g. bubble tube).
- Sound: calming music or noises.

- Touch/proprioception: deep pressure can often be calming to people.
- Smell: e.g. essential oils.
- Taste: e.g. having a cup of tea/hot chocolate.

Find out more about anxiety

You could consider listening to some podcasts related to anxiety. One related specifically to coronavirus is here: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/how-to-handle-coronavirus-anxiety-special-edition/id1087147821?i=1000468295073>, and there is a collection of 8 Different Podcasts to listen to regarding anxiety here: <https://www.calmer-you.com/feeling-anxious-or-worried-listen-to-these-8-podcasts/>.

Seeking further support

Many of the feelings you are experiencing right now could be considered normal reactions to abnormal events. Putting in place some of the suggested actions to cope and manage the worries may lead to a reduction in some of the negative effects associated with Covid-19 and self-isolation. However, if you are concerned about a persistent change in your mood or wellbeing, please contact your GP. There are also other organisations that can offer advice and support – you can visit <https://www.hertfordshirefamiliesfirst.org.uk/covid19-special-edition/current-news/links-for-mental-health-and-general-wellbeing> for further information.

Information to help children understand what is happening

The following resources may help children to understand about Covid-19 and some of the health and safety measures in place. For more information, see the Lockdown resource produced by the Educational Psychology Service.

Social stories:

- <https://www.andnextcomesl.com/2018/08/free-social-stories-about-going-to-school.html>
- <https://www.bwd-localoffer.org.uk/kb5/blackburn/directory/service.page?id=ME1rvtavljc&localofferchannel=0&fbclid=IwAR1SnqX5SXBCF9OKR1-JCfVSO5NVQn8fjPJlrjGN7dDVsyjHmvP-60-vo1k>

While we can't hug:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PnnFrPaRgY&fbclid=IwAR0XEciuVXeo1sx1AxRYKOoYSY25HhzwO_OKbTfN6hQ5VILhgvnjeQqqJ80&app=desktop

Back to school:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUda5y8PAUE&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR12V65hii3XnIC5BlZj1AScWINY7GWTfED30EolECJOzkB8ZSGVVA2xIE&app=desktop>

Social distancing visuals:

- <https://inclusiveteach.com/2020/05/20/covid-19-back-to-school-resources/>


Information about wearing face masks:

- Hertfordshire EPS have produced a resource with information to support children to understand and cope with seeing face coverings and masks. A copy can be requested from your contact EP.

Signposting

Information and Advice Helplines

Anxiety UK


 : 03444 775 774

Web: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Mental Health Foundation


Web: www.mentalhealth.org.uk

No Panic-Voluntary charity offering support for sufferers of panic attacks and OCD.

 : 0844 967 4848


Web: www.nopanic.org.uk

OCD Action-Support for people with OCD. Includes information on treatment and online resources.

 : 0845 390 6232

Web: www.ocdaction.org.uk


NSPCC-dedicated to ending child abuse and child cruelty.

 : 0800 1111 for Childline for children (24-hour helpline)

0808 800 5000 for adults concerned about a child

Web: www.nspcc.org.uk


Beat-Eating disorder support

 : 0808 801 0677 (adults) or 0808 801 0711 (for under-18s)

Web: www.b-eat.co.uk

HPFT provide a CYP Eating Disorder service and has a Multi-Disciplinary Team providing countywide support: <https://www.hpft.nhs.uk/services/community-services/community-eating-disorders-service/>

Mencap-working with people with a learning disability, their families and carers.

 : 0808 808 1111

Web: www.mencap.org.uk

Managing self-harm webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFZCCbdXPZs>

Support available from local services

Service	Support Available	How to access it
Educational Psychology Service	<p>From 1st June, the full range of EP services will be on offer, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The daily contact line for parents/carers 5 days a week ▪ Statutory work that includes both Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments and contribution to Annual Reviews ▪ Crisis and bereavement support for school staff, via telephone contact with head teachers and school leaders ▪ Training sessions and systemic work to support schools with a range of topics including transition ▪ Contact EP linked to the school for informal queries or requests for consultation around whole school, group or individual needs. This may lead to further assessment or intervention as appropriate. ▪ SENCo support groups (arranged locally on request) 	<p>Email or phone your contact EP to arrange an initial discussion around need. The school SENCo should have details. If you are unsure who this is, please contact:</p> <p>North team 01438 843379</p> <p>East team 01992 556998</p> <p>StAD team 01442 453904</p> <p>W3RH team 01442 453043</p> <p>A service request and baseline assessment form for will need to be completed for involvement with individual pupils.</p>
Communication and Autism Team	<p>The Communication and Autism Team have planned 'back to school' support for children and schools on their caseload which is based on level of need.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emergency visits will be arranged for students who need urgent support 2. Visits to schools with high numbers of students who need support – advice and guidance will be provided for several students 	<p>Schools should contact the Lead Teacher directly to request urgent support</p> <p>Local teams will make contact for schools with students in categories 1-4.</p>

3. Other High Need CYP & Transition: pre-emptive visits will be offered for students who may find this period difficult and are not covered by 1 or 2 – short written advice will be provided
4. Postponed visits will be rebooked
5. New Referrals will be accepted once 1-4 has been covered

New referrals can be made through the usual process but won't be responded to until more urgent transition needs (1-4) have been addressed

School Nursing

There is a School Nurse on duty every weekday that can support you with any concerns you may have about a child's/children's health and wellbeing.

The service is continuing to accept referrals for children and young people requiring support for low level mental health, emotional and wellbeing concerns including anxiety, low mood, anger, behaviour, self-esteem, stress and sleep issues.

Chat health texting service is available for young people aged 11 to 19. Texts are responded to by a School Nurse between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday

You can also access further information from the websites: [Hertfordshire Family Centre Service](#) [Health for Kids](#) [Health for Teens](#)

School nurses can be contacted on: 0300 123 7572 from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday

Referrals can be made online through the following link:

<https://www.hct.nhs.uk/forms/school-nursing-form.asp>

Chathealth texting service - 07480 635050

Mental Health Support Teams

The 'Schools and Families Advice Line' (SFAL) is a new service established to provide emotional wellbeing advice and early help to children and young people, families and schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. This service is open to self-referrals from families and young people, and education, health and other professionals involved in supporting young people and their families

Telephone: 0300 777 0707

Email: hpft.spa@nhs.net

You will get a call back from a mental health practitioner between 8am-5pm, Monday-Friday. Support will be offered in a one-off, up to 1 hour phone call

ESC outreach teams

ESC Outreach teams are available for each DSPL area. Support may differ across areas but the offers available include:

- Transition support packs for schools to deliver with year 6 pupils (e.g. The Links; Chessbrook ESC)
- Transition support for identified pupils from year 6 to year 7 (e.g. Decorum Education Support Centre)
- Remote delivery of SEMH interventions for referred pupils (Chessbrook ESC; Rivers ESC; DSPL 3 Primary Behaviour Team)
- Free counselling for parents of referred students (Decorum ESC)
- Advice to SENCos and class teachers (DSPL 3 Primary Behaviour Team)

Contact the ESC Outreach Manager for information on the specific provision and referral routes for your area.

Strategic Leads for Mental Health in Schools

Staff Wellbeing and Peer support sessions: Two 90 minute sessions per week, facilitated by Strategic Leads for Mental Health in Schools. Provides opportunities to share experiences with peers countywide in a safe facilitated environment. The aim is to provide the opportunity for up to 8 school professionals (maximum of two places per school) to access a Staff Wellbeing group facilitated by the Strategic Leads for Mental Health in Schools- Yael Leinman and Breda O'Neill.

Kite Mark Webinars- Weekly two-hour session available to schools and colleges. The Webinar aims to introduce and familiarize participants with the Healthy Young Minds in Herts Self review and Kite Mark including key resources and materials. Provides opportunities to access examples of good practice across schools/settings with colleagues countywide and to consider next steps for your school/setting. It is a practical and interactive webinar and participants are required to print out the Kite Mark RAG document and have it available to refer to which will be emailed out in advance.

Bookings for peer support sessions and Kite Mark Webinars can be made via SchoolMHTraining@hertfordshire.gov.uk



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