Advice and guidance for schools during covid-19

Transition and returning to school

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Kirklees Educational Psychology Service

Kirklees COUNCIL

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Introduction

Research suggests that many children and young people can find the transition between schools unsettling and stressful. Following the current Public Health Crisis (Covid-19) it is likely that many children and young people will experience similar feelings when they return to school once social isolation ends, especially those who are vulnerable, have special educational needs, or are moving to a new school. The purpose of this guidance is therefore to provide advice on how schools can support their children and young people in managing this transition.

Why is transition important?

It is important that we support our children and young people to experience successful transitions back to school, recognising that transition is a process and not a single event. We know that an individual's experiences during this time may have a powerful and long-lasting effect not just on academic outcomes as well as impacting on their self-esteem and emotional wellbeing. During a period of transition children and young people can also experience:

- A loss of attachment to familiar people, friends, the environment and objects within that environment
- Role and identity uncertainty
- Entry into an environment that is less predictable
- A perceived loss of control
- A feeling of being de-skilled and less valued
- Uncertainty about the future

How is this transition different?

We must be aware that the return to school will be a very different experience for every school and for the different people, children, staff and parents/carers – within the school.
A lot has changed over the past weeks and will continue to change as children and young people return to school. There will be many uncertainties around what that return could look like.

Schools have excellent practice to draw on for this transition however we all know that this transition will be much more complex and it is important that we are honest with ourselves and each other about how difficult this experience will be for the majority of us.

Factors to take into account : the current context

Schools haven't stopped: Many schools have remained open and all school staff have continued to work hard, at times over the school holidays and even in different schools. Staff may be tired as well as affected by the difficult context and this may impact upon our ability to lead, manage and respond to change.

Re-establishing routines: For some of us the return to school will be a huge relief and we may think that everything is returning to normal. However, we will have all been affected in some way or another by the experience of COVID-19 and it will take time for us to adjust to the 'new' normal. It is important that we recognise and allow for this by being kind to each other and ourselves.

Re-establishing expectations: Whilst school may bring much welcome routine, re-establishment of routine in itself may be difficult for some, not just for school routines but for all of these other things we do on a normal day, sleep, getting up, ,mealtimes, etc. We will need to re-learn the 'rhythm' of school and adjust to it as it changes over the coming months.

Differences in learning: Every child will have had a different experience of learning. Some children will have spent almost every day engaged in formal learning activities and done everything that schools have sent. At the other extreme there will be many children who may have done very little or even none whilst they not been in school. Home learning is not the same as school learning. All homes are different; children will have had different access to resources at home, many parents/carers will have been in juggling work with child care, parents/carers themselves have different skills, interests and levels of commitment, there may have been a lack of space at home and not enough quiet.

The priority for adults and children alike on return to school is the focus on re-building relationships and whilst we need to establish what children have learnt and what they may have forgotten, we need to avoid exacerbating anxieties by focusing on formal learning and testing and instead use informal means which also allow us to find out about and celebrate the many non-school related things they have learnt.

Some children will have been in school for some or all of the time: We cannot assume that those children who have been in school during lock down are ok, many of these children have been our most vulnerable. School may have served as a safe haven during lockdown and they may feel this safety is now to be disrupted by other children returning. Children of key workers may have some trauma, there may have been family separation to protect certain family members, clapping for the NHS may well make children feel supported however it will also have highlighted the risks that their parents/carers were taking and continue to take. These children will also need support.

Safeguarding: For some children, spending so much time in the home during lock down will have been extremely difficult. We have all heard about the significant rise in domestic abuse since lock down started and some children will have experienced significant trauma and harm during this period, not just those children we typically identify as vulnerable but as a possibility for any child. It will be imperative that we ensure children have safe spaces to talk about their experiences during lock down with trusted adults who will listen to them and are trained to respond effectively. Talking may take time and we need to be ready when they are ready to talk.

Bereavement: It is likely that everyone will know of someone who has been directly affected by coronavirus and we need to ensure that any absences from school are not wholly associated with illness or death, e.g., those children who do not return to schools for reasons such as house moves, continued home education, etc, as well as acknowledge those children who are shielding. This will ensure that children do not wholly associate absence with illness and death.

Sensory needs: Whilst ultimately looking forward to returning to school, some children may struggle with being around people difficult and potentially overwhelming. Anxiety may also play a part given that children may have developed a fear of being close to people in general whilst social distancing. We need to be aware that many will express their sensory issues and anxiety around physical proximity of others.

Separation anxiety: The vast majority of children will have got used to being with parents/carers and immediate family for a long period of time and many will struggle with a separation and experience anxiety when they are back in school.

Uniform: Many children will have grown whilst they have been out of school and this may create problems with uniform particularly if parents/carers are unable to access new uniform before a school return, either through lack of availability or financial pressures. Uniform rules may need to be relaxed to accommodate this as children are welcomed back into school.

Support for staff: All staff will have been affected in one way or another and we need to ensure we can support our colleagues. Some may have been in school, others working at home, others not working at all and as such, we need to allow time to rebuild our school community. Headteachers in particular have had enormous decisions to make and a vast amount of information and guidance to consider and digest. They will also need support once schools reopen their doors.

A summary of key considerations and practical activities can be found on pages 23-27.

Key Principles of a 'Good' Transition

Whilst the current circumstances are unprecedented, the key principles of successful transitions still apply to the present situation (whether children are returning to the same class/setting before the end of the academic year or entering into a new class/setting)

although the means of executing transition processes may need to look different. It is worth noting that as well as the children and young people who are transitioning to a new environment that schools should consider every child and young person as a new pupil due to the amount of time that they have been absent.

Effective transitions are supported by:
- ***Advance planning and preparation***
- ***Clear processes for communication***
- ***Consideration of relationships***

(The practices to support these principles are further detailed in the later sections on parents/carers and the specific provisions to enable transition)

Planning and Preparation
- Identify information to be shared with children and young people and families – what class they are going to, which staff they will be with, which children and young people they will be with, what the routines will be, etc.
- Plan activities projects that can support the transition process. Ensure these are accessible to all children and young people.
- Work with parents/carers to enable them to support their child(ren) and prepare them for a successful return to school.
- Identify the children and young people who will need a more enhanced and individualised transition plan.

Clear Communication
- Ensure regular communication with parents/carers. This will help to ensure that the right information is being shared at the right time, and will help parents/carers to feel confident in the process.
- Communicate with the children and young people in an age-appropriate manner i.e. use of video messages from staff, emails, newsletters.
- Communicate regularly with all staff to make them aware of plans and any changes from the 'normal' ways of working.
- Communicate with feeder/receiving schools and ensure processes are in place for the transfer of all necessary information for those children who may be entering a new setting.
- Plan 'check-in' processes to review the settling in process and two-way feedback process with parents/carers.

Consideration of Relationships
- Plan time for children and young people and staff to develop relationships and to get to know each other.

- Identify children and young people who need key workers. Review who this will be, plan for how this relationship will be established/re-established.
- Consider the social relationships available to individual children and young people, i.e. are they with established and known friends.

Examples of good transition practices could be:
- Communication between staff and settings to find out about the children and young people. This should not solely be for the purpose of sharing academic attainment but also involve personal information that is needed – such as good at sports, lost a parent, particular interest in dinosaurs, etc.
- Communication about specific issues linked to the COVID-19 outbreak, such as the loss or serious illness of close family members or friends, time in hospital, etc
- Involvement of the children and young people themselves as much as possible so they too can share their likes and dislikes, one example could be the completion of an 'All about me' activity.
- Communication with parents/carers, not only to find out additional information but also to allow parents/carers to raise any specific concerns about recent events or ask questions.
- Schools to think how they can use technology to aid transition if it is not possible for children and young people to directly access settings. This could be in the form of virtual tours, question and answer sessions, etc.
- The development of visual resources that can be accessed online such as examples of dinner menus, what the uniform looks like, typical timetable, etc.

Specific Cohorts and Groups to be Considered
In addition to considering the processes in place to support all children and young people returning to school, there are some specific groups that may require additional planning. These children and young people include (but are not limited to) those who will be transitioning to a new school (those moving into Reception, Year 3, Year 7, Year 12), those with an identified SEND (with or without an EHCP), children in care and those who are on child protection plans.

The information below is intended to be a guide to some of strategies that may support groups where specific plans for transition are required.

Transition to a New School
- Create a virtual tour of the school which can be posted on the school's website. This could even be done by children who are attending school (with parental permission).

- A visual resource with photos of key people/places in school and can be posted on school's website for all to access.

- Provide other visual resources regarding the rules and routines of the day such as pictures of the uniform, timetables, etc
- Where class teachers/tutors are identified, contact parents/carers directly and dependent upon age speak to the child/young person.
- Consideration of whether class teacher/form tutor send the child/young person a letter to let them know they are thinking about them.
- School to provide a Q&A sheet for parents/carers to ask any questions and answers can be shared.
- Schools to try and gain as much information as they can about the child/young person from parents/carers, the child, the previous school or any agencies that are currently involved with the child
- Consideration of sending home some activities that children can complete about themselves (age dependent) that can give adults opportunity to find out their thoughts. This could be things such as 'All about me' sheets containing photos of the child.

Transition of Children from Nursery into School

The transition from nursery to full time school can be a particularly anxious time for parents/carers and children as they begin their formal education. Due to the current pandemic, typical events may not have happened to support transition. It is important to think about transition as a process rather than an event, as it will take time for both children and parents/carers to settle into the new structure. Below are some possible ideas that could be helpful.

- Place an even stronger emphasis on consulting with parents/carers, this will help to reduce their stress which can otherwise transmit to their child.
- Share information: additional questions to consider when completing/discussing your transition documentation might be: sleep, what comforts them, how they show distress, etc.
- Having friends in the same class helps children adjust to the demands of the new setting. Ask parents/carers about their child as well as staff from previous settings, if any.
- Help the child to become familiar with your setting which under current circumstances could be by providing virtual photo books and/or video tours of key features of the school/classroom, e.g. entrance, toilets, pegs, break out area, playground, a selection of toys/equipment available by providing these on your website.
- Relaxed/staggered starts under the current situation will be evermore important to allow the child and their parent/carer to take their time separating and to choose what the child is ready to engage in. This will need to be agreed with parents/carers in order to try accommodate their needs, such as returning to work.
- Adopt an individualised approach to separation; be watchful and flexible to respond to the variable needs of individual children and families. These are likely to be accentuated after

the pandemic. Observe attachment behaviours. Young children who are securely attached need to continue to experience an optimum level of support and nurturing care with their key adults. Children who are showing insecure or avoidant attachment behaviours need help building relationships.

- Hellos and goodbyes: the time when parents/carers will need to feel most connected with and supported by practitioners, especially at this challenging time will be at the beginning and end of sessions. What parents/carers and children will need at handover transition times is the soothing presence of a sensitive practitioner who understands and empathises with them.
- Predictability and routines will be important, especially during the settling in phase without too many interruptions to sustained play or too many breaks for adult-driven tasks, such as snack times, assemblies and whole-class discussions.
- Listening to children - ask gentle questions, provide opportunity for children to voice concerns. Incorporate ideas and feelings about change and transition into their play, through story and drama, role play and in their 'small world' play.

Vulnerable groups of children and young people/those with SEND and those shielding
There are specific groups of children and young people that settings must be thinking about when planning the return to school. These include children and young people who are likely to have the found the changes in routines or disruption to relationships extremely challenging, such as those with social communication needs and/or social emotional and mental health needs. These groups may need to have specific plans in place that take into account the support and teaching approaches that have proved effective in the past.

Information on how to support children and young people with specific needs can help can be found in pages 28-43.

Advice for parents and carers

The return to school will also be a time of significant change for parents and carers. Most have been at home with their children for an extended period and themselves may have worries about the return to school. They may have concerns about their child settling into a new class, or for some, a new school, or be worried about the enduring emotional impact of recent events, including experiences of loss and bereavement as well as any lasting impact of the disruption to their son or daughter's learning and progress. They may be worried about their child's ability to re-establish friendships and relationships once back in schools and have concern for their child's safety, particularly if they have any existing health concerns

It is important that schools and professionals appreciate the thoughts and worries of parents/carers and pro-actively seek to reduce anxieties which may transfer to the individual child, reassuring parents/carers that any feelings of worry are understandable and normal in the current circumstances.

- Offer opportunities for regular communication, including any updates relating to the latest government guidance.
- Gather parent/carer views surrounding transition.
- Acknowledge and directly address any parental anxieties and/or concerns.
- Provide clear information about the type of support and strategies you plan to provide for children and young people on their return.
- Provide clear communication around the structures and routines of the school day for example, social distancing, hygiene, etc.
- Provide the opportunity for parents/carers to ask questions about the transition back to school for example, a virtual meeting and/or forum.
- Give consideration to how you might build and maintain social connectedness for parents/carers that continue to home school children and young people.
- Offer reassurance to parents/carers, with regards to home schooling to help avoid any feeling of shame or anxiety.
- Offer reassurance to parents/carers that may be required to continue home schooling children and young people that are shielding.
- Signpost parents/carers to resources which they can use at home with their children to reduce potential anxieties.
- Offer affirming messages, e.g. 'our priority is to keep your children and young people safe'

Parents/carers of children entering Reception / Year 1

For the parents/carers of children formally entering school for the first time, the current situation may result in increased worries and the possibility of separation anxiety occurring.

- Schools may consider replacing the typical 'home visits' that support transition, with virtual meetings and telephone/video calls where this is possible.
- Parents/carers are likely to find the use of virtual video tours of the setting, including points of entrance, cloakrooms, etc., useful.
- Consider how you can enhance home-school communication in the initial weeks.
- Parents/carers may need greater sensitivity and flexibility in how they separate from their child at the start of the day. Work with parents/carers to make this an emotionally supportive process for them, as well as their child.
- Staff should ensure they are available to talk to parents/carers at the start and end of day. Parents/carers may need more contact, and over a longer period of time than is typically expected. This may mean that an extra member of staff is required to support classroom routines at that time in order to make key staff available.
- Resources such as 'The Invisible String' can also help parents/carers to feel connected to their son or daughter when they are separated.

Parents/carers of children and young people leaving the setting (Year 6, or moving to a different setting)

- Consider how school can say 'goodbye' to parents/carers, as well as the children and young people, even if this is done retrospectively.

- Let parents/carers know what information has been shared with the new school, so that they feel reassured that essential information has been passed on.

Parents/carers of children moving from Primary to Secondary Education (or changing settings)

- Ensure that parents/carers are given adequate and enhanced opportunity to share their views and information about their son/daughter in advance of transition.
- Personal contact (by telephone call or email) from the form tutor/head of year will likely be appreciated by most parents/carers.
- Make sure parents/carers are aware of the contact that there has been with the primary school (or previous school) so that they feel assured that information has been effectively shared.
- Share information about routines and what the first few weeks will look like.
- Make sure that parents/carers know who the key points of contact are and assure them of their readiness and availability to answer questions and talk to them.
- All of the above points may need to be offered at an enhanced level for those children with identified needs and known vulnerabilities. Make sure parents/carers understand and know about the support and provisions that are being put in place (as appropriate).

The importance of the relationships within the school community

Knowing your children and young people is what makes schools places that the community will turn to as a key support, placing their trust in schools to help children and young people in their recovery. What we know from research and experience is that the single most important thing to consider when planning transition during times of crisis is the need to rebuild relationships.

We also know from resilience research that school staff are often cited as trusted significant adults and positive role models for children and young people and often have the skills needed to support children and young people through difficult times and to help them recover. Recovery will not happen overnight so we need to allow ourselves and others time for this and acknowledge that many adults in schools will be experiencing a similar range of emotions and reactions as everyone else within the community.

Supporting ourselves

What is important to remember however is that before any of us can help others, we need to help ourselves**.** Taking time to recognise our own stress and distress and then to adopt strategies that provide psychological resilience and reduce our stress are not only important but also professionally responsible. More detailed information can be found in document ***Staff wellbeing support for the covid-19 pandemic, Kirklees Educational Psychology Service, May 2020**.* The following includes some ideas can help us to manage our own stress as adults at this difficult time:

Try to:

- Take time out to get sufficient sleep, rest, relax and eat regularly and healthily.
- Talk to people you trust and allow yourself to be comforted. You don't have to tell everyone everything, but not saying anything to anyone is often unhelpful.
- Reduce outside demands and avoid taking on additional responsibilities.
- Spend time in a place where you feel safe and calm to go over what's happened over the course of the day/week. Don't force yourself to do this if the feelings are too strong or intense at the time.
- Try to reduce your access to the constant stream of news from media outlets and social media. Try scheduling 'digital power off' times.
- Use relaxation strategies e.g. slow breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, self-talk.
- Build in opportunities for recognising hope and positive strength.
- Allow yourself experiences of sadness and grief.
- Buddy up with someone else in school – check in with each other at various times.
- Join the staff room – it can be a place of sanctuary when things feel difficult.
- Try using mindfulness based activities – those you can use in the moment to support you to stop ….clear your mind for a few seconds….focus on your breath….carry on again.

Try to avoid:

- Bottling up feelings. Consider whether it would be helpful to talk about them with someone you trust.
- Feeling embarrassed by your thoughts, feelings or those of others, these are normal reactions to a stressful event and period of time.
- Isolating yourself from those you trust and feel safe around.
- Putting pressure on yourself to do any activities or have any discussions that you don't feel up to.
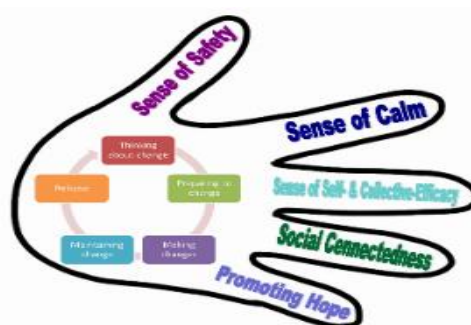
Supporting children's wellbeing on their return to school

For many children, going back to school will be a welcome return, however, it will also be a time of anxiety. It is important to remember that each child will have had their own experience. There have been many discussions in educational and psychological circles about the need for 'trauma informed practices' with regard to this specific transition and it is essential to highlight that <u>trauma is a response, not an event.</u> All staff, children and families have experiences of the impact of COVID 19 on our lives and whilst not everyone will present with trauma, a wide spectrum of emotional needs and responses should be expected.

It will take time for children to re-establish and re-learn routines and expectations in schools. It will be important to respond to what children have learnt, not what we expect them to have learnt, and what they may have forgotten. It could well be over-whelming and frightening to be amongst groups of children and adults, especially given the concentrated time spent in the home environment because of 'lock down'. Children will have become used to being with their parents/carers and immediate family for an extended period. This will be a potential source of anxiety for young children.

Teachers and other adults who listen with empathy perform an important therapeutic function, without being therapists. Some children may be carrying a large emotional burden and school might be their only place to talk about this.

Research has identified five key principles that support recovery following a disaster or serious incident. These principles will be important to consider when supporting members of staff, children and young people upon their return to school.

A sense of safety: To feel able to participate in work and lessons, staff and children need to feel safe and secure. This will be a key element due to the changing nature of Covid-19 and how it will continue to be a worry as results and information changes. Another significant element is helping to manage their worry about family members and friends through normalising and validating, which will add to their feelings of safety.

Things schools can do:

- Provide clear information surrounding structures and routines for everyone and provide this information beforehand wherever possible.
- Provide the opportunity for children and young people to share their voice to enhance their sense of belonging.

- Encourage children and young people to speak to members of staff in school regarding their anxieties, worries, and fears.
- Provide safe spaces to talk and distraction activities, e.g., calming corners, regulation stations or 'fidget' boxes.
- Identify a safe place for children to go to if they are experiencing emotional dysregulation.

A sense of calm: Children and young people are likely to experience a range of big feelings including pleasant and unpleasant emotions. Anxiety is a reasonable and healthy response. The measures in place because of Covid-19 are continuing and children and young people, staff and parents/carers may need their feelings validated and normalised. They may need to be assured of safety strategies schools are putting in place as they reopen

Things schools can do:

- Provide all children and young people with a 'remote transition', e.g. videos/photos of their classroom and school, videos/photos of staff, virtual meetings with staff where possible including the chance for them to ask any questions they may have.
- Provide all children with clear information on structures and routines before they begin attending the setting. This may include an explicit outline of the expectations surrounding hand washing, social distancing, etc.
- Communicate with any previous school setting to help identify which children and young people may require additional support, e.g. those identified as at risk of emotionally-based school avoidance.
- Offer affirmation messages such as 'we look forward to meeting you' and 'our priority is to keep you safe'.
- Spend additional time welcoming the children and young people back to school.
- Acknowledge the unusual circumstances and the impact that this may have on children and young people.
- Acknowledge the changes that are now present, e.g. social distancing, hand washing etc.
- Build in time for discussions and for sharing their thoughts and feelings.
- Check in with children and young people frequently, both directly and indirectly, for example through the use of circle time.
- Model emotional regulation and coping strategies.
- Offer mindfulness sessions.
- Offer affirming messages such as, we look forward to you coming back into school and our priority is to keep you safe.

A sense of self- and collective- efficacy and building strengths and capacity: Children and adults need to feel that they have control over events and activities, particularly in times when circumstances are as uncertain as they are now. For children and young people, staff and parents/carers to feel empowered it is helpful for them to be fully aware and be involved in planning their return and the activities they are asked to do in and out of school. In order to support this feeling of empowerment it can help to support children and adults to develop and build their skills in problem solving, resilience and for them to see the outcomes of what they have contributed to.

We can support this through:

- Exploring with children and young people the times when they have coped with change in the past and use this to promote problem solving skills.
- Exploring with children and young people the ways they coped during lockdown to develop ideas around resilience.
- Support children and young people to identify and regulate their emotions to support the development of a feeling that they are in control and can manage.
- Creating a sense of community within the classroom.
- Providing children and young people with responsibilities such as specific jobs or tasks, where possible.

Social connectedness : Reinforcing connectedness to the school and peers will be crucial for children and young people during this period of transition. Facilitating a sense of connectedness in school where they feel safe and are genuinely cared about, wanted, listened to and supported will positively impact on their engagement, achievement and emotional well-being. The use of social media and technology which has been vitally important for staying in contact with friends, family and school staff and this will continue to be important for those still not able to attend school.

We can support this through:

- Providing opportunities for the development, or reconnection, of relationships with key adults to establish trust, rapport and promote a feeling of safety.
- Considering how areas of school can be developed to support increased interaction between staff and children and young people.
- Using group work time/circle time or tutor periods to promote a collective understanding of how to support each other.
- Encouraging peer to peer support.

- Supporting children and young people through any peer conflicts with the use of relational and restorative approaches.
- Modelling the behaviour you want to see in others, a sense of community to support children and young people to develop and maintain attachments, using language such as 'our school', 'our project', etc.

Promoting hope: The feeling of hope and that things will get better in the future is something that helps us all to cope with situations such as the present one. An event so unexpected and unique as Covid-19 often can overwhelm peoples' learned coping skills which can then result in them feeling quite hopeless. Whilst it is very important for all feelings to be listened to, validated and normalised, it is also helpful to support the whole school community to look to the future. Reminders to children and young people not in school that staff look forward to seeing them again implies that they **will,** and this can help with coping. Individuals can also be given hope when they feel empowered and included in activities and plans (linked with other points above) that help each other and which look towards a better future.

We can support this through:

- Promoting an environment which moves from being reactive to being responsive through increased connections between staff at all levels of the organisation.
- Encouraging thoughts of the future by working with children and young people to set targets and goals.
- Creating positive factors in the school environment; ask children and young people to reflect upon previous successes and strengths; celebrating successes; use positive language; and build towards positive events, e.g. a fun quiz or reward.

The importance of building strengths and capacity

Every child and young person has strengths, aspirations, hopes and dreams. Use solution focused conversations to find out about these. (Asking with interest, '*What are you good at? And what else?*' and if possible deepening the conversation; '*When you are at your best what are you pleased and proud to notice about yourself? What does this tell you about what you might be capable of?*') Promote opportunities for the child or young person to experience success and help them to work out ways they can put these skills to use in other areas of their learning and life. Sometimes they will need help to make the connections and generalise the skills.
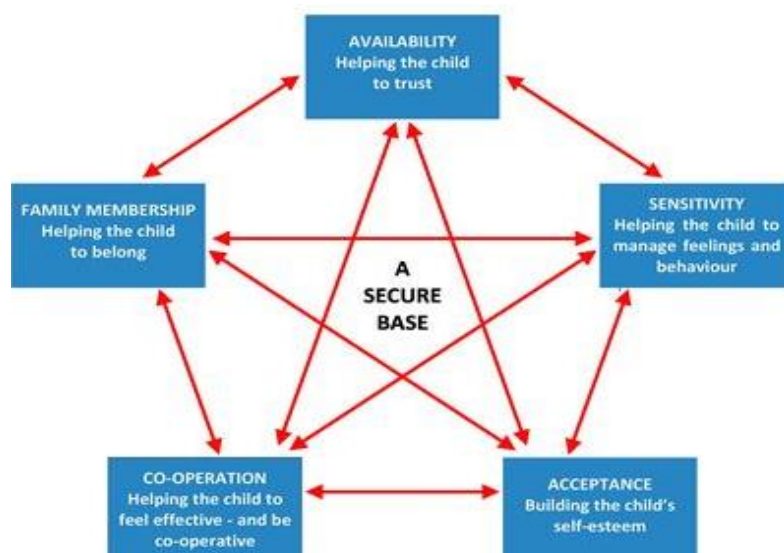
Research tells us that everyone possesses all 24 of the above character strengths in different degrees, and these are universal across cultures and nations. Ask young people to identify their top five strengths (and do the same for yourself!) Discuss other strengths you and they have noticed and build in opportunities to remind them of these. Planning actions and activities to help children and young people to be their best helps to bring a sense of personal control and achievement to the day- to-day life.

Recognising the impact of thoughts and feelings on behaviour an Attachment Aware Approach

The principles of attachment (relationships with others) are key in thinking about and supporting transition. For some children and young people, they have healthy and secure attachments with their parents/carers, meaning that they might have no/little issue separating from parents/carers on return to school, despite being in their care for an extended period of time. We know that transition can prove to be difficult, even when children have secure and stable 'backgrounds', reinforcing the need to use attachment informed principles, universally, for all students. Additionally, the uncertainly of coronavirus and the impact that this has had, such as routines being disrupted and/or family members being ill, may cause anxiety for children upon their return to school. An attachment (emotional/relational) informed approach will also ensure that provision is appropriate for those children whose attachments may have been 'disrupted', so are not secure.

It is important that relationships with staff are re-established for all children. The school setting, as well as the adults that care for children and young people, need to be safe and secure bases, in order for them to be emotionally able and ready to learn. The following diagram demonstrates the importance of schools being a safe base and how this can be achieved:

For many schools one of the key challenges will be working out how to uphold boundaries and school rules during any transition period following lockdown; particularly for those children and young people who are vulnerable and may have experienced lockdown as a frightening and distressing time. We know that consistent boundaries help students feel safer, and that school needs to feel as predictable a place as it can be, after experiencing something that has been so unpredictable. However, knowing how to balance this with the need, for some children and young people, to access more intensive support can feel challenging.

Behaviour as communication

Some young people might display observable and active 'acting out' behaviours that communicate a clear emotional need. Others might become withdrawn or appear unusually needy. We can try to notice our tendency to make judgements around behaviour (e.g. 'mad'/'bad') and remind ourselves to view all behaviour as an indicator of emotions to which we can respond in an empathic and caring manner. This can be particularly hard to do when a young person acts in a way that hurts or frightens others.

School as a nurturing environment

The general principle of providing a safe environment, high in nurture and structure, with adults responding in a consistent manner, maintaining clear boundaries and expectations around behaviour is still important, most particularly, when other areas of a student's life may not feel as structured. This consistency is containing for young people
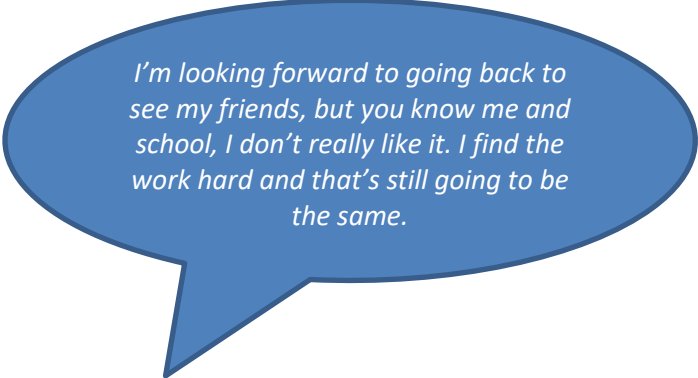
Trust your instincts in knowing when ignoring low level behaviour is needed. Reflecting on whether students would typically exhibit these types of behaviours, or whether it is "out of character" will help to make informed judgements. Hold on to the importance of **flexibility** for these children and young people.

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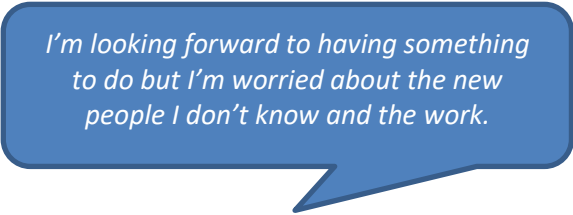## What are some of our vulnerable children and young people saying about the return to school?

Like many children, those children who are in care or have previously been in care may be experiencing increased worries and concerns related to the unknown of transitioning back to school during the Coronavirus pandemic. For children in care, the current situation may trigger previous traumas linked to adverse childhood experiences. As a result of such triggers these children may require a higher intensity and frequency of support prior to, during and after their transition back into school. It is essential that all adults working with such children and young people are aware and mindful of their individual experiences throughout these unprecedented times so that appropriate trauma informed support can be offered by key trusted adults and embedded into their transition plans.

The EP team collected the views of a small group of children and young people, age range 7–17, who agreed to share their views on transitioning back to school during the coronavirus pandemic. They were asked how they feel about returning to school during this challenging time and what they feel might be helpful for their transition back into school or college. All those involved are currently in care or have previously been in care and present with some degree of SEMH needs.

Although the majority of the children and young people were looking forward to going back to school and seeing peers it is also important to acknowledge that for many of them, school is not their favourite place and that being at home during this time has been an enjoyable experience and some carers stated that their young people are currently much calmer, happier and content at home.
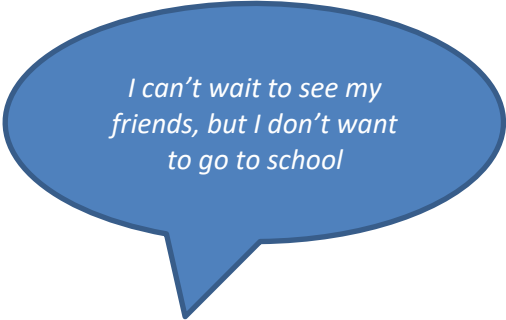
I'm looking forward to going back to see my friends, but you know me and school, I don't really like it. I find the work hard and that's still going to be the same.

I'm looking forward to having something to do but I'm worried about the new people I don't know and the work.

It's mixed for me; I'm looking forward to seeing my friends, but school isn't my favourite place

I can't wait to see my friends, but I don't want to go to school

One of the main themes that emerged for the children and young people transitioning to new schools was that of anxieties around unfamiliar teachers, teaching assistants and peers.

> Will I have a lady that works with me at my new school like I do now? I'm worried I don't know them.

> Can I meet the teachers first that will be working with me or speak to them over the phone before I have to go in? That way I might not be as nervous.

> Will I know all the children and what happens if I don't like some of them?

A common theme that all the children and young people mentioned was the structure of the school day, timetables and when they will be expected to attend school.

> Do you think we'll have to go in every day for the whole day? I won't know when to go into school, how will I know?

> I'm worried about how big the classes will be. How can my all my year group go in at the same time and be safe?

> It's going to be really hard going back to a normal school day with the five phases of learning. I've been doing work at home but not as much as I would have done at school and I bet loads of other kids are the same. I hope they just let us get used to the environment again and being in school before making us do all the work again. It will be too much all at once.

> How will they organise the class? Will half the students go in for the first part of the week and the second half go in for the rest of the week? We'll have to be in two blocks because social distancing will be really hard. Will we take turns?

One young person expressed concerns for the teachers' mental health and their ability to enforce social distancing rules.

> I think it's going to be so stressful for the teachers to try and keep us all two metres apart, it's more strain on them. They will become so stressed and probably cross when kids don't listen. How are they going to keep friendship groups apart that haven't seen each other for ages?

Some of the children and young people referred to the virus and spoke about their concerns about social distancing and being safe.

> What will happen if my friend or someone from my class gets it? Will the whole class then have to stay at home?

> This virus and going into school is going to put us more at risk, I could take it home. We have spent weeks keeping safe at home and staying away from people and now we have to go into school. I just don't get it.

The majority of the children and young people were clear about what measures they believe should be put in place to help them transition back to school.

> I'd like to meet the lady that will be helping me before I go into school so I will know her and not feel as worried.

> I want to know how many people will be in my class.

> I was doing much better in school before this. I used to get extra help with my English and Maths, and I could always go to the Safeguarding team when I needed to talk to someone. Maybe I might need that type of help again to help me catch up. I know who I can still go and speak to though if I need to.

> I'd like to know at least two weeks before school starts that I'm going back so I can get used to the idea

> I need a clear plan, so I know what to expect. I need them to tell me when I have to be in school and when I don't. I also want to know what happens if someone gets the virus in my class.

Gaining the views of children and young people will help to ensure a positive transition and reassure children and young people that their voice is being heard. Knowing what they have liked and disliked about lockdown and their hopes and fears will help to inform how we plan for their return.

The template below may be useful for schools to use to get such information. This example has been completed by a young person with a diagnosis of Autism.

What I want my teachers to know about...

What I've liked about learning from home during lockdown...	What I've disliked about learning from home during lockdown....
"I get more down time. The pressure's not as much. Not getting shoved in corridors at school".	"I get too much work from mum. I miss the people from school. I'm missing Wensleydale Sandwiches from Merrie England".
What I worry about returning to school.....	**What I hope for about returning to school.....**
"Getting tired at school. Being out of my usual routine".	"Less people which means less competition".

Other things I want my teachers to know.....

"I've been working on my art and cooking skills while I've been at home".

- O Please write back to me my name is _____
- O Please talk with me
- O Please share with my class

Appendix 1: Additional Considerations

Issues to be aware of …	Possible impact	Practical activities
Everything is NOT normal	Expectations of normality amongst children and young people, staff and parents/carers will be high	• Schools to manage expectations and uncertainty in their communication to all stakeholders. Time must be available to do this. • The ways in which school is likely to be different is considered and communicated to all prior to the return to school. • There may need to be activities and displays in school which reflect upon this time. Things that we are sad about/things that we are glad about. • Time provided within the curriculum to consider this.
Ongoing social distancing/hygiene considerations	Impact on attendance and distribution of classes within the school, as well as routines and practices. Understanding how social distancing measures might affect emotional wellbeing.	• Part time attendance, spacing in the classroom, time for hygiene. • Plan, communicate in advance, reinforce expectations consistently. • Communicate with families what measures are in place before children return so they know what to expect. • Film the classrooms and make available online so children and young people can see the environmental changes before they return. • Reinforce and explain that the measures are in place to keep everyone safe.
Routines have changed	Not just for children but for whole families. There will need to be some sympathy and understanding around this.	• Plan clear routines, share these in advance, including any phased returns. • Consider the impact of these new routines on attendance. How can families be supported/encouraged to prepare themselves for going back to school? • Communicate with them to proactively plan for those who might need additional support.
Relationships	These need to be re-established and this may be an opportunity for renewal	• **PRIORTISE** staff to focus on creating relationships with children and young people, such as, greetings, individual conversations, 'checking in', modelling and expressing calmness and warmth. Treat all children as having attachment needs.

Gaps in learning	Huge variation in the experiences and opportunities available to young people.	- Do not begin with formal assessment, assess knowledge more informally. Start the curriculum with what children know … not what you think has been taught. - Topics may be revision for some…this will not harm them. Plan additional tasks/topics for those who have covered more to enable those who haven't to catch up. Give children the opportunity to share what they have learned (even if it is having watched films or played Minecraft). - Catch up intervention for those who need it.
Some children have remained in school throughout	Possible stigmatisation, potential feelings that safe space is being intruded upon when all children return.	Preparation of those children who have remained on site for the arrival of others. Perhaps plan a welcome back event or ask them to help with the planning and decision making about how they can welcome other children back to school.
Trauma and bereavement	Many children/staff will have experienced trauma and bereavement	- Provide opportunities and encourage communication from parents/carers around child experiences. Plan information sharing. - Staff to be vigilant (update awareness training prior to schools opening). - Provide safe spaces for children to talk about experiences. - Clear communication regarding the whereabouts of members of the school community. - Opportunities to celebrate members of the school community who have died.
Safeguarding	There is a likely increase in safeguarding issues including those related to poverty, domestic violence, parental mental health, substance abuse etc.	- Ensure that training is refreshed and up to date so that staff are aware. - Provide opportunity for young people to share experiences if needed. - Extra time and support for DSL upon re-opening to work with relevant agencies to safeguard children.

Ongoing illness anxiety	Concerns about illness are heightened and are likely to be continually reinforced.	• Balance between acknowledging the issue and managing anxiety. • Use of Social Stories. • Opportunity to teach coping skills. • Implementation of nurture and attachment principles to reassure and re-establish trusting and safe relationships.
Separation anxiety	Children (and staff) are used to being home with their families. This is particularly comforting when the world feels so unsafe. This may particularly impact where there are key workers or vulnerable people in the family.	• Clarify communication lines so that children and young people are confident that contact could be made with them at school, in case of emergency • Again, acknowledge feelings and teach coping skills.
Additional needs, especially children with ASC	Any time of change can be challenging …	• Additional preparation will be required, such as videos of any changes to the school; new routines and expectations shared in advance; additional adult support available to check in, explain, answer questions and reassure, as well as use of social stories/comic strip conversations to prepare for going back to school.
Sensory needs	Potentially overwhelming environment for staff and children and young people. A development of fear of being around people – unused to people in their personal space.	• Consider a phased return, staggered starts and/or part time timetables. • Availability of calm spaces, ear defenders, ability to protect personal space and choose who accesses it. • Use of markers on the floor may be necessary.
Placement transitions	Loss of 'ending' activities, Loss of transition activities during the previous term.	• Online transition activities, such as virtual school tours, sharing of videos the school has (sports/concerts) photos of classrooms and teachers. Virtual meeting with class teacher if possible. • Phased starts.

		• Real opportunities to meet the class teacher in home environment in September, where possible. • Walks past the school. • Acquisition of uniform when this is possible.
Uniform issues	Outgrown, not replaceable at current time, financial issues	• Not the time for strict adherence. Show flexibility and aim to return to uniform at a later date. Consider how to organise uniform swops (may need to consider washing and handling of clothes at this time).
Staff issues	Burnout, lack of downtime, bereavement, illness, stress and anxiety, childcare issues, financial issues	• Consider how staff wellbeing has been monitored. What have their experiences been and have they been bereaved of family members/friends? • What are their current circumstances and family pressures? Are their children back at school? How can they be supported to balance work and home life? • What information do you know to help create flexibility and support for them upon their return? • Have staff had sufficient time and information to prepare for their return to work? Are expectations and plans to transition children back in to school clear? • Initially, limit demands made of them, such as reducing pressures outside of the classroom (paperwork, unnecessary meetings and observations). The focus should be on relationships and supporting one another to re-adjust, rather than performance. • Ensure that they have space and time to talk not only to each other but the children and young people.
Frustration for some children and young people	Some children and young people may feel frustrated that they want school to just get back to normal and feel	• Acknowledgement that children and young people will respond to the situation in lots of different ways, some better than others and that this is fine. There is no shame in not coping.

	they have coped well with the crisis and school being shut. Some will have developed resilience through various coping strategies and approaches.	• Celebration of the ways in which children and young people coped and managed to keep going and feeling positive or hopeful. • Recognise and celebrate the resilience and coping seen amongst our schools, settings and families and in so doing, consider ways to connect people to share how they have coped with these times, what sources of strength and even joy they have discovered, what reserves within themselves and their communities have taken them by surprise.

With thanks to the Microsoft Teams national working party of Educational Psychologists/Education Professionals. This document has been adapted from that shared within the team. Ref https://www.seainclusion.co.uk/blog-1*

Appendix 2: **Transition Information: Targeted Support for Children in Care and those with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs**

Like many children, those in care or with SEMH needs may be experiencing an increase in anxieties and worries related to Covid-19, lockdown and the uncertainties related to schooling. However, previous experiences of trauma, loss and other adverse childhood experiences may mean that these children need a greater intensity and frequency of support before, during and following their transition back into school settings. It is important that schools, teachers and other adults are aware of the specific lockdown experiences of individual children, and that they are mindful of a child's attachment needs and survival mechanisms, so that trauma-informed relational support can be provided.

When	What support can school provide?	What support can the Educational Psychology Team provide?
When children are not attending school	Regularly checking in with children and young people when at home and letting them know you are keeping them in mind will also support them to feel connected to school and maintain relationships with key members of staff. Consider how ''social distancing' could be reframed as 'physical distancing' supporting children and young people to still be able to make genuine positive relationships despite not being physically close. Consultations between schools, carers and social workers prior to transition will enable all staff to have a knowledge and understanding of a child's individual experiences, difficulties and concerns related to their return to school. Children need time to prepare and adapt to change. Children in care may benefit from being informed of small details – who will teach them, where will they sit, who will be in their class, what will they be doing during the first days and weeks back at school.	SENCO to discuss any concerns around individual children with school Educational Psychologist

	Wherever possible, involve the child in this, asking them what they would like their new school to know about them. It is important to capture the strengths, interests and achievements of the child alongside their story of coming into care Have an awareness that due to periods of frequent or prolonged stress, the child's development may be affected in significant ways and they may have emotional responses typical of a much younger child. This will need to be taken into account when planning transitions. Teaching and learning approaches will need to match the emotional developmental level of the child Consider extending the transition process. Some children in care may take longer to feel safe and comfortable within the school environment Staff should consider the child's lockdown experiences. Ask what lockdown was like for them? What was the best/worst part? Did any significant events happen? Do they have any concerns/worries/questions about returning to school?	
Initial support when children return to school, e.g. first two weeks	Establish clear routines and consistency. These are important for all children and even more so for children who have experienced traumatic backgrounds. Loss of routine, structure, friendship, opportunity and freedom may trigger previous experiences of trauma and bereavement	Your school EP will be able to provide support and advice around particular children. The SENCO should discuss individual cases with their school EP.

	Focus on ways to help the child feel safe. It will be essential to support children in learning which behaviours are expected in a new situation, such as moving to a new school, due to the different coping strategies children in care may have developed Behaviours should be recognised as a form of communication. The behavior might be a very normal response to adverse life experiences. It is important that staff exercise flexibility for these children. Differentiate expectations - set the expectations so that children and young people aren't set up to fail. Remind children and young people of school routines and expectations and practice doing these in the context of social distancing. When transitioning children and young people back into school approaches that are concerned with emotional wellbeing should be used. Children will need a familiar, trusted adult or keyworker who is emotionally available and able to support the child using trauma-informed and attachment aware practice. Acknowledge losses, fears and other emotions when present. Provide reassurance that the thoughts, feelings and reactions are a normal part of recovering from the losses associated with the	For children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans it will be important to continue to monitor how the child/young person can progress with their outcomes. Where concerns continue to exist the SENCO can request a consultation/ annual review with the school Educational Psychologist.

	pandemic, even though they may be upsetting, and that they will lessen in intensity over time. Acknowledge losses, fears and other emotions when present. Provide reassurance that the thoughts, feelings and reactions are a normal part of recovering from the losses associated with the pandemic, even though they may be upsetting, and that they will lessen in intensity over time. Discuss the relationship between behaviour, thoughts and feelings with students, and how we often use our behaviour to communicate our feelings, particularly when we are unable to label the emotion. Remember that sometimes when children and young people are finding something emotionally difficult, the first signs might be through changes in their behaviour. This can be especially true for children and young people with existing needs or those that were most affected and are finding it difficult to communicate how they are feeling. Understand that engaging in learning feels risky for many of this group of children and young people. They risk failure and damage to their self-esteem. No matter the age of the child, their efforts in engaging in learning should be recognised and praised.	
Longer-term support	The general principle of providing a safe environment, high in nurture and structure, with adults responding in a consistent	The Educational Psychology Service can also provide advice and training in relation to any

	manner, maintaining clear boundaries and expectations around behaviour will be important over a long term period especially when other areas of a child or young person's life may not feel as structured. This consistency is containing for children and young people. Staff should remain vigilant and observant for any changes in behaviour. A 'settled' child may be using learned survival strategies to mask their difficulties. Staff may wish to hold early epep/MSP reviews with regular communication with social worker and carers.	particular approaches schools require to support attachment and trauma aware approaches. This can also include specialist Inclusion Worker support for children in care as well as training and support in delivering SEMH interventions/approaches.

Appendix 3: Transition Information: Targeted Support for Children with Social Communication and Interaction Difficulties and Autism

During the Covid-19 public health crisis the Kirklees Complex Communication and Interaction Needs (CC&IN) Outreach and Educational Psychology Teams have continued to work closely with schools in Kirklees. Through regular dialogue with school staff it is clear that settings have been working really hard to ensure the needs of children and young people are being met.

The lockdown will have been a very difficult time for many children and young people and their families, and those with autism may have found the experience particularly challenging.

The Autism Education Trust (AET) states that:

"Change is difficult for many people on the autism spectrum... The need for routine and familiarity leads to anxiety when interruptions occur. Many people on the autism spectrum have rigid thought processes, and high levels of anxiety are linked to unpredictability. They respond best to a consistent approach, and this is likely to be interrupted during a transition period..."

During the public health crisis many children and young people may have become anxious about the unknown and the unpredictability of what will happen next. Things that were consistent in school may now look slightly different going forward.

When	What Support Can School Provide?	Support that KSP CC&IN Outreach can offer
Before most children and young people have returned to school **During lockdown**	Some school settings are currently working on the following to support transitions for children and young people with CC&IN Needs & Autism: • Creating virtual tours and photographs of the school setting and allowing children to access these. These tours and photographs may need to incorporate what the new school environment may look like as the setting opens again.	During the public health crisis the CC&I Needs Outreach Team have been in direct contact with school staff in Kirklees. Schools are aware that they can contact the team anytime to discuss strategies for children and young people that are known to the service and that as settings re-open they can discuss transition.

- Gather children and young people's views - We all recognise how important it is to listen to children and young people's thoughts, particularly as those with Autism or CCI difficulties don't always see the world as other people might. Some may have very particular worries and hopes about returning to school, which may seem small to other people but are extremely important to them. Once these things are recognised and acknowledged, school staff can work together with the child/young person and parents/carers to avoid problems occurring.
- Schools could create a virtual worry box before the setting opens again for questions and concerns to be addressed. Also those children and young people making a key transition to a new setting in September could benefit from this approach as they may have questions and these could be addressed in a virtual format.

The CC&I Needs Outreach Team often reference the advice and guidance for transitions that are outlined in the transition booklet created by the Autism education trust (AET) which includes transitions from:

- Early years to primary school
- Primary to secondary school
- Secondary to college/further education

Schools have a clear process when contacting the CC&I Needs Outreach Team. They can contact individual members of the team by e mail or phone: 01924 483744. The bullet points below are examples of support provided to schools.

- Telephone consultations with school staff and parents/carers about children and young people that are referred into the service.
- Advice over the phone to school and parents/carers around strategies to help support a child/young person. These strategies would normally focus on school, however at this time may need to be tailored to work at home.
- Telephone meetings with school staff and parents/carers to share resources that may support children and young people with ASC during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Discussions with staff working in school settings with children and young people that are referred into our service. This may need to be phone-based advice around practical techniques for school staff that they could implement.
- Liaison with other agencies with permission from parents/carers.
- Advice over the phone to schools around transitions, this can include key transitions

		such as moving from primary school to secondary school. • Communication with schools about how to refer a child or young person into the service. **The SENCO can get in touch with the school's contact Educational Psychologist should they need any additional help thinking through the support needed for children and young people with complex needs.**
Useful sites & resources: Transitioning *https://network.autism.org.uk/good-practice/evidence-base/autism-transitioning-primary-secondary-school* *https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachemnt/transitiontoolkit.pdf*		
Initial support **As settings begin to re-open**	• Children with ASC will need time to process the transition back to school as they begin to open again. Children and young people may be taught in different classrooms and with teachers and staff that they are less familiar with. • Schools are making use of Social Stories and other visual supports linked to the public health crisis to explain how things are different for children and young people after their return to school. • Schools have been thinking carefully about children and young people with ASC that have sensory sensitivities. These children and young people may need more time to adjust to the physical and sensory environment and situation in school. They may need adaption to	• Telephone conversations with school staff and parents/carers about children and young people that are referred into our service who are making a transition back into a school setting. • Supporting schools with specific resources during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example visual supports, social scripts and stories. **The SENCo can get in touch with the school's contact Educational Psychologist should they need any additional help thinking through the support needed for children and young people with complex needs.**

	handwashing process to account for any sensory needs they may have. • Schools are looking closely at how to adjust timetables and checklists for individuals to reflect new routines in school. • Schools are supporting children and young people with ASC making transitions back into school by providing them with activities linked to their special interests. • Whilst many things will be different when children return to school, it may be helpful to highlight the things in their lives which have remained the same. Aspects of sameness can be very reassuring when changes are made.	
Useful site & resources: Covid 19 visual resources https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/sites/afirm.fpg.unc.edu/files/covid-resources/Supporting%20Individuals%20with%20Autism%20through%20Uncertian%20Times%20Full%20Packet.pdf *I can wear a mask social story* *https://www.autism.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/I-can-wear-a-mask-1-1.pdf* *Simple visual on handwashing* *http://www.fivewaysschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/coronavirus-washing-hands-2.pdf* Toolkits https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/southglos/directory/files/early_years_autism_toolkit.pdf https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/southglos/directory/files/autism_toolkit_primary_sg_version_07_03_19.pdf https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/southglos/directory/files/autism_secondary_toolkit_sg_-_v4_6_june_2019.pdf		
Longer term support	• Children and young people with CC&IN needs may need a little longer to settle into the changes at school until they become accustomed to them. • Some children may not have been able to practise the skills they learnt at school before 'lockdown'. It might be	• Observations of children and young people in school and other settings when external agencies are able to visit schools. • Supporting schools to develop clear packages of support and advising on

	necessary to return to previous learning targets to review and consolidate these skills. • Changes can create a lot of anxiety for children and young people with CC&I needs and Autism which can endure for some time. It is likely that such children and young people will need extra emotional regulation/relaxation time which is scheduled in the school day to help mitigate anxiety and strong feelings. • It will be helpful if adults are tuned in to any changes in behaviour which might indicate that a young person is experiencing stress and anxiety and struggling to cope. Quickly addressing these issues with parents/carers and outreach professionals can help to prevent longer term difficulties.	strategies to support the staff to help the child/young person in school. • Modelling techniques for school staff to implement. • Liaison with other agencies with permission from parents/carers. • Linking with parents and carers. • Advice for transitions, this can include key transitions such as moving from primary school to secondary school. • Training and advice for school based staff. **Your school Educational Psychologist will be able to provide support and advice regarding children young people with complex needs. Support can be requested through the termly planning meeting.**

Useful sites and resources:

Know your normal – helpful resource to identify when young people with autism are feeling unsettled.

https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/sites/default/files/youth-participation/toolkit/Ambitious-about-Autism-know-your-normal-toolkit.pdf

A picture book for children who worry about Covid 19

https://www.calameo.com/read/000777721945cfe5bb9cc?authid=Xu9pcOzU3TQx

Produced by the Complex Communication and Interaction Outreach Team and specialist EP for Autism.

Appendix 4: Transition Information: Targeted Support for Children with Cognition and Learning Needs

Through regular dialogue with school staff it is clear that settings have been working really hard to ensure the needs of children and young people are being met. Every child will have had a different experience of learning. Some children will have spent almost every day engaged in formal learning activities and done everything that schools have sent. At the other extreme there will be many children who may have done very little or even none whilst they not been in school. Home learning is not the same as school learning. All homes are different; children will have had different access to resources at home, many parents/carers will have been in juggling work with child care, parents/carers themselves have different skills, interests and levels of commitment, there may have been a lack of space at home and not enough quiet.

The priority for adults and children alike on return to school is the focus on re-building relationships and whilst we need to establish what children have learnt and what they may have forgotten, we need to avoid exacerbating anxieties by focusing on formal learning and testing and instead use informal means which also allow us to find out about and celebrate the many non-school related things they have learnt.

When	What Support Can School Provide?	Support That Educational Psychology can offer
Before most children/young people have returned to school **During lockdown**	Some school settings are currently working on the following to support transitions for children/young people with learning and cognition needs: • Provide support to enable children and young people to access learning while schools are disrupted, especially. This should be as accessible as possible, taking into account varying degrees of access to technology and online resources. This could include online video tutorials, printing out and delivering resources where parents/carers are struggling to access resources at home, signposting to useful educational television programmes/apps, ringing parents/carers directly to provide practical, do-able advice on teaching particular areas. • For children/young people on key transitions into a new setting help the child to become familiar with your setting which under current circumstances could be by providing virtual photo books and/or video	• Telephone consultations with school staff and parents/carers about children/young people that are referred into the service. • Advice over the phone to school and parents/carers around strategies to help support a child/young person. These strategies would normally focus on school, however at this time may need to be tailored to work at home. • Telephone meetings with school staff and parents/carers to share resources that may support children/young people with learning and cognition needs during home learning.

	tours of key features of the school/classroom e.g. entrance, toilets, pegs, break out area, playground, a selection of toys/equipment available by providing these on your website.	• Discussions with staff working in school settings with children/young people that are referred into our service. This may need to be phone-based advice around practical techniques for school staff that they could implement.
	• For children/young people entering a nursery/reception setting staff to carry out virtual home visits and make sure they keep in regular contact throughout the summer term.	• Liaison with other agencies with permission from parents/carers.
	• Get in touch with children's early years settings to find out what additional needs the children have and what the settings were doing to cater for these needs before lockdown.	• Advice over the phone to schools around transitions, this can include key transitions such as moving from primary school to secondary school.
	• Ask parents/carers to produce a child profile with their child that includes likes, dislikes, what they're good at and what they find challenging.	• Communication with schools about children or young people that may need to be referred to the service.
	• Make sure staff are trained to support any medical needs.	
	• Predictability and routines will be important, especially during the settling in phase without too many interruptions to sustained play or too many breaks for adult-driven tasks, such as snack times, assemblies and whole-class discussions.	
Useful sites & resources: https://schoolleaders.thekeysupport.com/covid-19/safeguard-and-support-children/young people/pupil-wellbeing-and-mental-health/coronavirus-supporting-transition-into-reception/		
Initial support **As settings begin to re-open**	• When children return to school, it will be important to focus on their social, emotional and mental health needs primarily. Reduce emphasising the need to 'catch up' to children which may increase anxiety. Acknowledge the fact that some children will have learnt skills and knowledge that is outside of the curriculum.	• Telephone conversations with school staff and parents/carers about children/young people that are known to the EP service who are making a transition back into a school setting.
	• As children settle back into school and into the school routine, they are likely to require support and reminders to help them to	• Supporting schools with specific resources during the COVID-19

	re-learn the behaviours and routines for 'good' learning, e.g. good looking, good listening, good sitting, etc. It is possible that children may have forgotten these behaviours and picked up 'unhelpful' habits whilst being out of school. • Reorganising classrooms to ensure social distancing will result in classes feeling very different for the children. There will likely be anxiety from children and parents regarding friendship groups. Where possible try and consider friendships when looking at groupings. Increasing contact with friends is likely to support with transition back into school and help children feel connected again with school even if it feels very different. • Support children and young people to understand the current situation at a developmentally appropriate stage. Stick to government, NHS and well known charity pages for valid and up-to-date information. • For young children provide opportunities within the Year 1 curriculum to incorporate aspects of the EYFS which were missed during school closures. Year 1 teaching and support staff may find it helpful to work together with Foundation Stage staff to share experience and expertise and plan early learning and play activities, which have clear SMART outcomes, linked to the ELGs.	pandemic, for example visual supports, social scripts and stories.

Useful site & resources:

Covid-19 visual resources
https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/sites/afirm.fpg.unc.edu/files/covid-resources/Supporting%20Individuals%20with%20Autism%20through%20Uncertian%20Times%20Full%20Packet.pdf

I can wear a mask social story

Longer term support	• Some children may not have been able to practise the skills they learnt at school before 'lockdown'. It might be necessary to return to previous learning targets to review and consolidate these skills. • It will be helpful if adults are tuned in to any changes in behavior which might indicate that a young person is experiencing stress and anxiety and struggling to cope. Quickly addressing these issues with parents/carers and outreach professionals can help to prevent longer term difficulties.	• Observations of children/young people in school and other settings when external agencies are able to visit schools. • Supporting schools to develop clear package of support and advising on strategies to support the staff to support the child/young person in school. • Virtual training around learning needs (as agreed with school Educational Psychologist as appropriate) • Liaison with other agencies with permission from parents/carers. • Linking with parents/carers and carers. • Advice for transitions, this can include key transitions such as moving from primary school to secondary school. • Training and advice for school-based staff.
Useful sites and resources:		

Know your normal – helpful resource to identify when young people with autism are feeling unsettled.
https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/sites/default/files/youth-participation/toolkit/Ambitious-about-Autism-know-your-normal-toolkit.pdf

A picture book for children who worry about Covid 19
https://www.calameo.com/read/000777721945cfe5bb9cc?authid=Xu9pcOzU3TQx

Appendix 5: Good Practice for schools: supporting children and young people who are at home due to shielding

Key considerations and advice for school staff

Children who are shielding and are not able to return to school with their classmates are at risk of feeling socially isolated and left behind which can lead to increased anxiety and stress. Shielding and distancing may also become frustrating and boring for lots of children. Children will need to continue to feel included and have a sense of purpose and meaning while they are away from school as well as a sense of control over their learning and progression. Below are some key considerations:

A coordinated and personalised approach

It is important for children and their parents and carers to be involved in discussing what the plan will be for them while they are at home and not in school with their peers. It may be helpful for the child to have a key person who will have regular contact with them and their parents and carers, and for this person to be responsible for putting together a coordinated and personalised plan for the child. The school may decide to have a delegated teacher with overall responsibility for children who are shielding.

Direct communication with the child and their family

Shielding children and young people will need reminding that they are being kept in mind. Opportunities to catch up on what is going well and not so well with staff will help them to feel supported. Questions to consider asking the child or young person can include:

- What is helping and not helping when communicating with school?
- Do they have any requests or messages to pass on to the class/other children/staff?
- Are there any particular concerns or anything that is worrying them a lot at the moment?
- Is there anything school can do to help improve things?
- What ways can the child/young person have fun whilst shielding?

Regular communication about the impact of the above on the child/young person with parents/carers, as well their own views of the child/young person would be beneficial. Staff should be accepting where possible of difficult feelings being expressed, like being worried and not wanting to return, or feeling frustrated, annoyed, irritated or resentful. Empathy and acceptance of feelings will be important in helping the child feel listen to, valued and cared for. Talking about hopes for the future may also help the young person keep in mind that although currently difficult, the current situation will not be permanent.

Talking to other children who are in school about the child at home

It is important to talk about the children who are at home and shielding as continuing to be active learners and members of the class, even though they are not present. Staff will need to be mindful of ensuring that other children perceive them as being included as members of the class when they are not present, and that they are not spoken about as if they are a separate group of children to those who are in school. They are essentially classmates who are working at home. Staff will need to discuss with the children who have returned to school why it is, in general terms, that some of their classmates will be at home learning and not in school. Staff may want to discuss further with the class what it might feel like to be at home still, and how to ensure they are not made to feel left behind.

Involving the child at home to maintain relationship with school and ensure progression of learning

Staff should try to help the shielding children and young people to maintain relationships with school. School could consider:

- including the child at home in class activities or small group/paired tasks via media
- live stream of a class discussion or activity,
- pairing up the child with a buddy who can relay any questions the child may have to teacher,
- provide a summary briefing of the day through direct contact home, media or by short video clip made by staff and pupils which can be shared with the child.