Well-being Pack

You might be noticing signs of increasing anxiety in your child as they're spending more time indoors and outside of their normal routines. These might include:

Pupils ages 3-6 years:

Regressing to behaviour they've outgrown, such as thumb-sucking or bed-wetting Showing greater fear at being separated from you

Tantrums

Trouble sleeping

For Pupils ages 7-10 years:

Expressing sadness, anger or fear

Sharing false information that they're hearing from their peers or seeing online Wanting to talk about coronavirus all the time

Not wanting to talk about the current situation at all

Having trouble concentrating

For Preteen and Teenaged pupils:

Acting out – this might include things like picking fights with you or with siblings or abusing alcohol or drugs

Becoming afraid to leave the house

Distancing themselves from their friends and family

Exhibiting intense emotions but being unable to talk about what they're feeling

Take care of yourself

It's really important right now to take care of your own physical and mental health. Children are very perceptive, and they react to what they sense from the adults around them.

Here are some things you can do to help keep yourself healthy:

Connect with others – maintain relationships with people you care about through phone and video calls

Exercise – take some time every day to move. You could go for a walk or run. You'll also find lots of fitness videos online for everything from yoga to dance. Find something you enjoy and that makes you feel good

Eat healthy meals – try to keep a well-balanced diet and drink enough water

Get some sleep – being anxious or worried can have a big impact on your sleep. If you're struggling to get a good night's sleep, try to develop a calming bedtime routine – for example, do 10 minutes of yoga or listen to calming music. There are also apps you can download that provide guided meditation to help you get to sleep more quickly

Turn off the news – it's important to keep up to date, but the 24-hour news cycle can make you more anxious. Limit your exposure to the news to only a small amount of time, just enough to know what the latest government guidance is

Do things you enjoy – now that we're all spending more time at home, we can finally take up that hobby we've always meant to learn. Try baking or gardening or learning to knit. These are also great activities we can share with our children

Set goals – it's easy to lose track of the days in our current situation, so it can be helpful to set daily and weekly goals to give us a sense of control and purpose. Examples might be setting a goal of walking for half an hour at least 3 times this week or reading a new book

Connect with the outdoors – depending on where you live, it may not be possible to spend time outside. If you don't have a garden or terrace, you can still open a window to let some fresh air and sunlight in. Put a comfortable chair by the window so you can look outside and get some air as you read a book.

Talk to Someone - during this difficult time, sharing with family and friends how you're feeling and what you're doing to cope can be helpful for both you and them. There are also helplines you can call for support – we've included a list at the end of this pack.

How to talk to your child about what's happening

No matter how calmly you manage the current environment, children are likely to be anxious, so it's important to talk to them about what's happening.

For younger children

Children pick up bits of information from their friends, from the news and from listening to adults talking around them – but they can misunderstand what they're hearing.

Deal with the news head-on and talk about it openly and calmly, giving them the fact

Give them age-appropriate information – take a look at:

BBC Newsround hub – regularly updated with information and advice

#covibook – for under 7s

Children's guide to coronavirus – a download from the Children's Commissioner to help explain the situation to children

Teach them how to know if information they find on the internet is reliable. Explain how some stories on social media may be based on rumours or inaccurate information

Encourage them to take breaks from listening to or reading the news – overexposure isn't helpful

Encourage questions

This will give them the confidence to reach out, if they have anything to ask

Be reassuring but honest when answering questions – it's ok if you don't have all the answers

Be ready to answer the same question over and over – children tend to repeat themselves when they're feeling uncertain or worried, so you might have to answer the same questions more than once as they seek extra reassurance

Be a role model

Recognise and manage your own worries first

Be open about your own feelings and let them know it's normal to be concerned – for example, let them know you're also finding the news a bit worrying and what you're doing to stay calm

Explain how our body's immune system protects us

It's constantly working against germs without us knowing. We can't and don't need to control this process

Explain that we're taking precautions against this particular germ because it's a new one which our bodies haven't come across before

Remind them how important it is that they eat healthy food, sleep and exercise, as this helps to fight germs

If it helps, reassure them that the effects of this virus on healthy young people are very mild

Keep doing your bit to help children reduce the spread of germs

Remind them to maintain good hygiene like bathing daily and wearing fresh clothes

Encourage them to sing 'happy birthday' twice when they're washing their hands

For older children

Older children will have the same anxieties about their own health and that of their family and friends as younger children. But they're also likely to feel socially isolated, and worried about the result of school closures on their education and what life will be like after the pandemic is over.

In addition to the steps above:

Reassure them that when more guidance comes from the school about how will be awarded, you'll share this with them as soon as you have it – you could also check that they understand the information you've received so far, in case there are any points of confusion or worry that the school could help to clarify

Encourage them to maintain social ties – relationships are especially important for older children, so give them room to keep in touch with their friends

Equip them with accurate information – for example:

Mythbusters from the World Health Organization

Data visualisation pack from Information is Beautiful (regularly updated)

Share tools to help them manage anxiety

YoungMinds: practical steps to take if you're anxious about coronavirus

Mind: how to take care of your wellbeing when staying home

If your child struggles with higher levels of anxiety

Some children are naturally more anxious, such as those with existing phobias or obsessive-compulsive disorders. The current situation can make those anxieties worse.

Get them to do activities such as counting, ordering and sorting tasks which can help them calm down

Encourage them to use relaxation techniques such as controlled breathing

Look out for obsessive or compulsive behaviours and try to get ahead of them early by challenging unhelpful thoughts and assumptions

If you're worried about your child's anxiety, **YoungMinds** is a charity dedicated to children's mental health. They've opened a parents' helpline for confidential, expert advice. You can reach them at 0808 802 5544

How to make home learning work for your family

We're realistic about what pupils will be able to do during this period, and we want you to be too.

You're not expected to become teachers and your children aren't expected to learn as they do in school. Simply providing them with some structure at home will help them to adapt.

The following tips are designed to help you create a positive learning environment at home. See what works best for your household.

Create and stick to a routine if you can. This is what children are used to. For example, eat breakfast at the same time and make sure they're dressed before starting the 'school' day – avoid staying in pyjamas!

Involve your children in setting the timetable where possible. It's a great opportunity for them to manage their own time better and it'll give them ownership

Check in with your children and try to keep to the timetable, but be flexible. If a task/activity is going well or they want more time, let it extend where possible

If you have more than 1 child at home, **consider combining their timetables**. For example, they might exercise and do maths together – see what works for your household

Designate a working space if possible, and at the end of the day have a clear cut-off to signal school time is over

Stick the timetable up on the wall so everyone knows what they should be doing when, and tick activities off throughout the day

Take stock at the end of each week. What's working and what isn't? Ask your children, involve them too

Distinguish between weekdays and weekends, to separate school life and home life

Give them chores to do so they feel more responsible about the daily routine at home

Ask them to **help you cook** and bake

Accept that **they'll probably watch more TV/spend time on their phone** – that's ok but you might want to set/agree some screen time limits

Please don't worry about your children getting behind with learning. Everyone's in the same boat, and when things get back to normal we'll make sure we get everyone back on track.

Here are some links to some lovely Home Learning websites to support you with additional ideas -

BBC Bitesize Online resource for learning and revision. Starting on 20 April, you'll also find daily lessons to support home learning	Website: https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize
GoNoodle Movement and mindfulness videos for primary children	Website: https://www.gonoodle.com/
STEM.org.uk Free home learning resources for all ages in science, technology, engineering and maths	Website: https://www.stem.org.uk/home-learning
Twinkl This popular site for teachers is now offering free daily activities for home learning	Website: https://www.twinkl.co.uk/home-learning-hub
English National Ballet Free ballet classes streamed daily	Website: https://www.youtube.com/user/enballet

Where to turn to for help

It's okay to not be okay. We all need someone to talk to sometimes. If you feel overwhelmed, at risk of abuse or experiencing financial need, there are people you can call on for support:

ORGANISATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
Mental Health Foundation Provides information and support for anyone with mental health problems or learning disabilities	Website: www.mentalhealth.org.uk
Mind A mental health charity	Phone: 0300 123 3393 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm) Website: www.mind.org.uk
PAPYRUS Youth suicide prevention society	Phone: 0800 068 4141 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 10pm, and 2pm to 10pm on weekends and bank holidays) Website: www.papyrus-uk.org
Samaritans Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair	Phone: 116 123 (free 24-hour helpline) Website: www.samaritans.org.uk

SANE Emotional support, information and guidance for people affected by mental illness, their families and carers	Website: www.sane.org.uk/support
YoungMinds A charity dedicated to children's mental health	Phone: Parents' helpline 0808 802 5544 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4pm) Website: www.youngminds.org.uk
Cruse Bereavement Care Support for grief and bereavement	Phone: 0808 808 1677 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5pm) Website: www.cruse.org.uk

ORGANISATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
NSPCC Child protection charity	Phone: 0808 800 5000 for adults concerned about a child (24-hour helpline) 0800 1111 for children (ChildLine's 24-hour helpline) Website: www.nspcc.org.uk
Refuge Advice on dealing with domestic violence	Phone: 0808 2000 247 (24-hour helpline) Website: www.refuge.org.uk

The NSPCC's website above has some great information on talking to children about Coronavirus, working from home, advice for managing co-parenting when separated, supporting SEND children, how to cope with tantrums, and how to make sure your children are safe online at home.

The Mental Health Foundation website above has some useful information on worries about Finance, housing and unemployment as well as mental health advice for people over 55.

We hope that you find this information helpful and useful. Please get in touch if there is anything more that you would like to talk over and get support with.

Very Best Wishes