SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

A supplementary section to 'A guide for schools using a resilience-based approach' (2020)

COMMUNITY FUND

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Centre of Resilience for Social Justice

Blackpool Council

Contents

Introduction

This section has been produced as a suppliment to 'Supporting Children and Young People's Mental Health; A guide for schools using a resilience-based approach' (Angie Hart, Anne Rathbone, Claire Stubbs, Mary Hinton, Lisa Buttery, Becky Heaver, Simon Duncan, Josie Maitland, Josh Thomson, Pauline Wigglesworth, Claire Walsh, Lisa Mills, Toni Roethling, Nathan Parker, Racheal Slater & Nina Smith, 2020). It is recommended that this section is read in conjucntion with the main guide.

The supplement has been developed in recognition that COVID-19 has brought additional challenges regarding emotional wellbeing and mental health and we recommend you read this section alongside the corresponding sections of the main guide.

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Published July 2020

1. The school's role in supporting positive mental health

School's responsibilities relating to social emotional mental health and wellbeing in relation to COVID-19

At the time of writing (June 2020), a range of guidance documents regarding education arrangements in the context of COVID-19 have been issued by the government departments responsible for education in England (see Emerging Minds, 2020), Scotland (Scottish Government, 2020), Wales (Welsh Goverment, 2020) and Northern Ireland (See NIDirect, 2020). Within these documents, there are a range of considerations for schools in preparing to welcome more children back to the school setting, including with regards to their mental health and wellbeing.

For example within the 'Actions for educational and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1st June' (DfE, 2020a) the guidance for education settings in England states that *"we would expect school leaders and teachers to consider their pupils' mental health and wellbeing and identify any pupil who may need additional support so they are ready to learn".*

This guidance also recommends that schools and educational settings:

- *Identify and plan how best to support the education of high needs groups, including disadvantaged pupils, and SEND and vulnerable pupils.*

- *Support pupils in Year 6, who will need both their primary and secondary schools to work together to support their upcoming transition to Year 7.*

- *Governing boards and senior leaders should be conscious of the wellbeing of all staff, including senior leaders themselves, and the need to implement flexible working practices in a way that promotes good work-life balance and supports teachers and leaders.*

WHO TO CONSIDER

The guidance recommends schools consider transitioning pupils, vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils and identifies pupils who may need additional support as well as looking after staff wellbeing.

There is also specific guidance for parents and carers issued by the Department of Education (England); 'What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak' (DfE, 2020b) that includes specific guidance on mental wellbeing.

Within the current focus of supporting more students to return to an education setting, it is also important to note children and young people considered 'vulnerable' (who are in any year group) have been and continue to be encouraged to attend school throughout the COVID-19 outbreak (where it is appropriate and there are no shielding concerns for the child or their household). The guidance issued by the Department for Education (England) specifically make reference to those who would benefit from attendance because of a mental health need (DfE, 2020b).

It is also really important to note that there have been some temporary but significant changes to the law in response to COVID-19. For example in England, the Department for Education have made temporary legislative changes to education, health and care (EHC) needs assessments and plans (DfE, 2020c). These changes modify a Local Authorities duty to secure the provision specified in a EHC plan, to making 'reasonable endeavours' to do so; and completing the EHC assessment process as soon as 'practically possible', rather than the previous 20 week specified period. They have also made changes to regulations affecting children's social care, making significant changes to the protections of children who are Looked After by the Local Authority (The Children's Commissioner, 2020a). Alongside many other people and organisations, we at Boingboing are deeply concerned about these changes. At a time when pre-existing social inequalities (IPPR, 2020) are being amplified by COVID-19, we believe there is a need to maintain, if not increase, our protections and commitments to young people who most need it. You can find out more about concerns relating to EHC plans from parents perspectives here (Special Needs Jungle, 2020). You can also find out more about the children's social care changes and a campaign to revoke them being led by the charity Article 39 here (Article39, 2020).
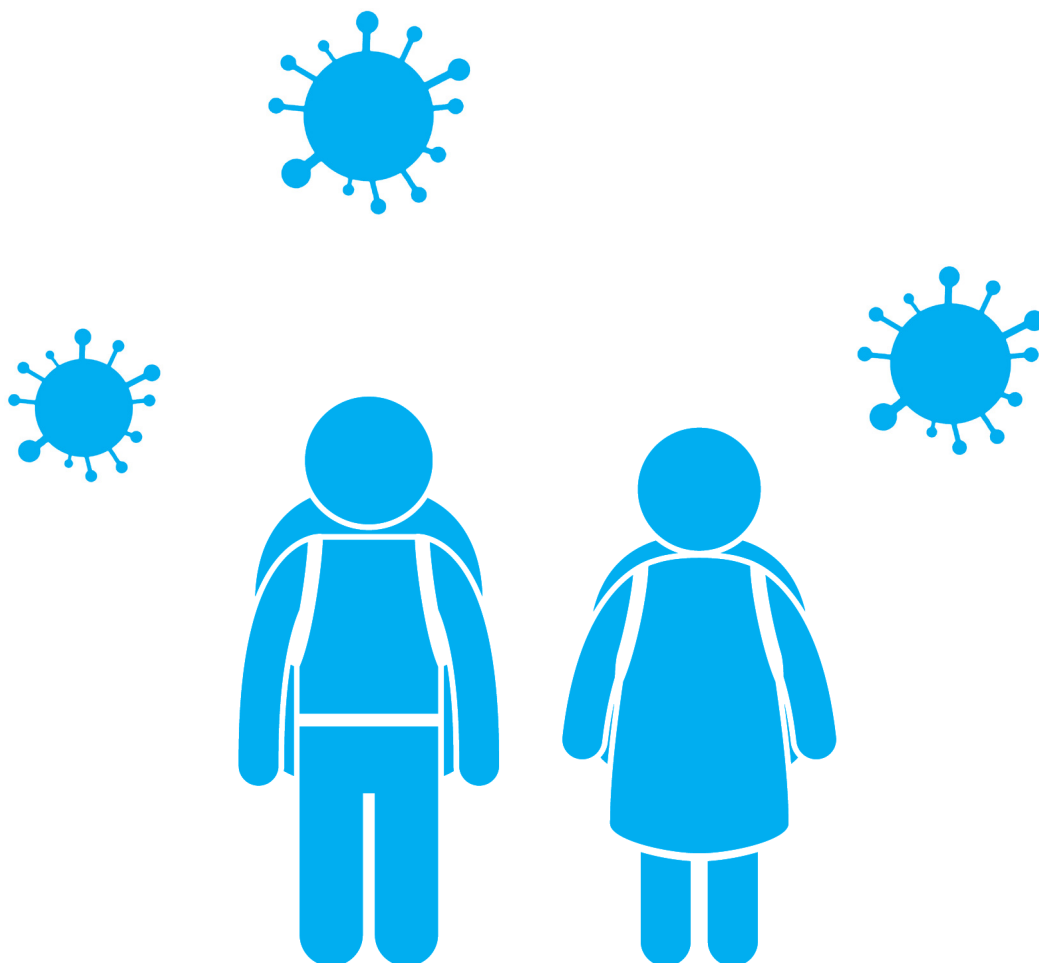
2. Understanding resilience in the context of COVID-19 and a whole school approach

As discussed in detail in the main guide (pages 10-18), a whole school approach to resilience means we see people in the context of their environments, and how their interaction with different factors within that environment can build resilience. This goes beyond individual resilience and looks at the different parts of the system together, recognising the many structural inequalities which impact on resilience and need to be addressed alongside individual agency.

COVID-19 has shone a further light on inequities in society and exacerbated them. Five million children have experienced food insecurity during lockdown (The Food Foundation, 2020), calls to domestic violence helplines have increased by 25% (The Guardian, 2020a) and hundreds of thousands of children have been unable to access online learning because of digital exclusion (The Children's Commissioner, 2020b). The damaging knock-on effect of inequality, which has been allowed to exist for decades has been starkly exposed, making it all the more important that we move from being a society which tries to cure people to a society which prevents harm.

In the past few months schools' community-facing role has been put under an important spotlight as thousands of teachers and school leaders have been supporting huge numbers of families across the nation. This presents a vision of what schools can be beyond the crisis, integrated into the community, using a whole school approach and offering an inclusive education to those remaining at home.

We know that children may have been exposed to family financial stresses, some have experienced domestic violence, abuse, bereavement and loss during the partial closure of schools; some will have been without routine and structure and may have lost touch with important peer relationships. Some year groups have not been able to benefit from transition processes to help ready them for their next steps, many will have missed opportunities for 'closure' and some with attendance difficulties will find it even harder to return to the physical school setting.

Strong school communities can respond resiliently and support the mental health and wellbeing of everyone. The global pandemic has impacted mental health universally and makes it more important than ever that we take a whole school approach. This involves saturating the environment with resilience-building opportunities and involving everyone in the process of rebuilding our education.

There is a need to avoid simply rushing to 'catch up' (The Guardian, 2020b) or return to a normal which was deeply flawed (The Guardian, 2020c). At the same time we need to remember that disadvantaged children have experienced the pandemic with fewer resources and therefore need to be at the forefront of our minds with a proactive response to their wellbeing.

A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

"A whole school approach means that ALL staff have a responsiblity to promote resilience and mental health."

Resilience Framework

One of the main tools that accompanies our whole school approach is the Resilience Framework, we think of it as a resilience building toolkit. Within the kit are five compartments: Basics, Belonging, Learning, Coping and Core self. Organised across each of these five areas are 42 Resilient Moves; everyday steps that evidence tells us can help build resilience. More details of the Resilience Framework are on page 16 of the main guide.

Schools can use the Resilience Framework to support the mental health and wellbeing of the school community. Here are some additional considerations when using the Resilience Framework at this challenging time:

Basics

- A feeling of physical and emotional safety is crucial to enable resilience and learning. Many pupils and adults may feel physically vulnerable to catching the disease. Fear can radiate to others and there is evidence that teacher stress is particularly contagious (Oberle and Schonert-Reichl, 2016). If children do not feel safe, they cannot learn.

- Families and staff at disproportionate risk of contracting COVID–19 may be particularly concerned about their health (BBC News, 2020). Work closely with them to take practical steps to mitigate the risks.

- Continue to support families with accessing food in a way that avoids stigma or embarrassment. Consider crowdfunding (Gofundme, 2020) for those with no recourse to public funds because of insecure immigration status.

- Communicate closely with parents/carers of children with SEND about their needs.

- Information exchange with the community is crucial. Regularly advertise mechanisms to obtain feedback from the community. Try to involve as many people as possible in

contributing to solutions and suggesting new processes to support safe behaviour. Audit what families need and how much learning they have been able to access.

- Setting boundaries together will promote a sense of agency. Discussing ways to greet and interact, such as a virtual 'High Five', will encourage connectedness and help to prevent unwanted contact.

- Clearly signpost parents, pupils, and staff to any help they can access for basic needs. Consider the newly vulnerable due to economic adversity and ensure that parents and pupils are aware of any financial support they might be able to receive. Reach out to local businesses and charities to ensure there is increased support available. Ask parents if any can offer help, expertise or advice to others.

- Create confidential ways to share information so that the school is aware of pupils whose families are newly at risk in an unfolding economic situation. Be mindful of potential traumatic experiences.

CHALLENGE BULLYING

Some pupils have expressed concerns about dangers of contagion being used for bullying. Use reminders, clear expectations and communicate reporting procedures.

PARENTS SAY

- Physical exercise and fresh air is vital for emotional wellbeing. Incorporate this into the daily timetable as much as possible.

- For all new routines send advance notice with clear messaging, visual/photographic cues and 'one click' links to someone who can give further advice.

Belonging

- After a period of time away from the school environment, it might be hard for some pupils, parents or staff to reintegrate into the school community. Focus on relationships and nurture to maintain pupils' capacity for learning. Be creative in finding gentle ways to draw people back into school (YoungMinds, 2020). Emphasise partnership when working with parents.

- Prioritise creating a sense of belonging for pupils who remain physically distant from school. Those without social media may have lost all contact with their peers. Young people report feeling their friendship groups are shrinking because casual interactions have been lost. Actively create opportunities for them to link with peers virtually.

- Remind everyone in school of their power in creating a sense of belonging for others and how important belonging is. Share stories and celebrate acts of reaching out to others.

- Prompt pupils and staff to remember that people's behaviour may be communicating distress. Provide information or training about the impact of trauma (Childmind Institute, 2020)

- Use curriculum time and PSHE to explore the rhythms of relationships and how to make up after arguments (NSPCC and PSHE Association, 2018).

- Implement regular times for staff, pupils and senior leaders to reconnect, checking in with staff, pupils and parents to ask how they are feeling or prominently display a means for them to express their concerns such as a Thoughts, Feelings and Suggestions box.

- For those who are unable to return to the school building ensure that they and their family continue to have regular contact with staff and are included as valued members of the school community.

SMS texting systems such as Firetext (www.firetext.co.uk) allow schools to send personalised short messages to parents relatively cheaply

Use existing pupil groups to ensure there is a structured approach to involving students but also design activities to capture voices of pupils who aren't usually heard.

TOP TIPS

Learning

- Learning builds resilience and supports positive mental health. To address and counter the upheaval unleashed by COVID-19, it is necessary that school communities build vital coping skills and emotional resilience (UNEASCO, 2020a).

- Use ready-made resources such as these from Place2Be which provide opportunities to think about self-efficacy and gratitude, hope and connectedness (Place2Be, 2020).

- Identify gaps in knowledge and misunderstandings acquired during lockdown through low stakes quizzes.

- Recognise, value and build on what children and staff have learned during lockdown. Discuss how their new skills can be used in an uncertain future.

- Use curriculum time to teach pupils to recognise and express their feelings (UNESCO, 2020b). Music, drama, dance, art and storytelling are all useful to develop the social and emotional literacy which will help pupils to process what happens as the situation with Covid-19 unfolds.

- Remember that memory is context specific (TES, 2020) and some pupils may be distressed because they appear to have forgotten all of the work they did at home. Reassure them that it will return and that practising recall reinforces memory.

- Ensure that disadvantaged pupils can still connect to the curriculum if they have not returned to school (e.g. Herts for learning, 2020).

- Work with all stakeholders to plan how to address learning loss with a range of catch up sessions which do not stigmatise pupils and ready them for future learning.

DID YOU KNOW…

In a recent survey by young people, for young people in Blackpool, young people said they found school support really valuable during lockdown (Blackpool Headstart, 2020).

Comments about lost learning and the crucial importance of GCSEs designed to motivate disengaged pupils can have a detrimental impact on those who are nervous about the future.

ADDRESS LEARNING LOSS SENSITIVELY

Coping

- Acknowledge worry as a normal response and share tips on self-regulation techniques.

- Ensure that mental health issues are openly discussed and that everyone consciously models and shares the benefits of seeking help. Help should be clearly signposted for pupils, staff and parents both in school and for those at home.

- Communally plan strategies to respond to unsafe behaviour, especially with respect to physical distancing, so staff can respond calmly and predictably. Other pupils may be very alert and distressed if distancing advice is breached.

- Use time in tutor time, class activities or PSHE for students to notice their feelings. Use distancing methods such as case studies to allow free discussion about the drivers for behaviour. An understanding of the principles of fight, flight or freeze responses can be taught as young as Reception (e.g. The fight flight freeze response, 2016).

- Reinforce a culture in the school where everyone is curious about why others behave in a certain way, rather than being judgemental. Teachers and leaders can admit the things that they do not know and model the celebration of mistakes as platforms for new learning (Dweck, 2015).

- Ensure that all staff are very aware not to pass on anxiety about lost learning and deficits but focus instead on rebuilding relationships and recreating a love of learning.

- Plan opportunities for staff and pupils to relax and have a laugh together for those in school and remaining at home.

- Transition: help pupils over the divide – consider ways to allow pupils to say goodbye and to prepare for their new environment (The Key for School Leaders, 2020). Virtual tours, meeting new class, creating buddies and see/meet new teacher. Encourage contact over the summer. There are resources here to support transition (CZONE, 2020).

Core self

- Hope is a key component of resilience and positive mental health. Create time for everyone to reflect on positives and find small things to celebrate.

- The crisis has created many opportunities for people to be kind to each other and to neighbours. Continue to give opportunities for everyone to perform small acts of kindness and consideration for how others might be feeling even if they are having a tough time.

- Create opportunities for reflection by staff and pupils about what they consider to be important and what their sense of purpose is. Be mindful of those who do not seem able to articulate purpose or motivation and consider giving them additional support.

Staff should remember that behaviour is communication and is not personal so that they can remain curious about the needs of pupils whose behaviour is difficult.

TOP TIP

The Noble Truths

The **Noble Truths** provide the foundation for all the Resilient Moves in the Framework and they are key to the work we do. We begin by **Accepting** where a young person is at in their life and try to understand their experiences without personal bias. We think about how we can **Conserve** what is already going well in their life; what are their strengths and how can we maintain these? **Commitment** is not only about committing to a young person but also about the young person committing to a new challenge they wish to overcome and/ or change. **Enlisting** is about recognising that at times we might need more support; it's OK to ask for help. We think they are particularly relevant during the Covid-19 pandemic:

Accept the current situation and explore the resources we have to build to a better future. Accept what we have been able to do in our schools to date, working during a crisis with very little information. Accept that we cannot take control of everything but that we can work with the community to adapt to new information as it arrives. Accept that different people are having individual experiences of the coronavirus pandemic and will respond in different ways.

Conserve the positives which have emerged. The kindness and offers of help. The opportunities to work with the wider community. The chance to strip away data driven targets and think creatively about learning. Conserve the good you have achieved building relationships with individual families you have helped. Conserve the boundaries and energies of all staff for the long haul, there is no easy fix.

Commit to your principles. The pandemic has stripped away the dominance of a testing culture and enabled schools to revisit their vision for school as a community of learning. As we recover and respond to new challenges, we have the opportunity to reinforce our principles and work in harmony with other schools and organisations. Commit to supporting and being alongside your most vulnerable families who have experienced adversity to a far greater extent and may take longer to recover, even if they do not shout the loudest.

Enlist help from everyone in the community. No one is an expert which allows us to genuinely seek the input of everyone involved including parents and pupils and work together to rebuild the school community. Consider your priorities in building a safe working environment and seek help, taking advantage of the spirit of mutual aid generated during the pandemic, by continuing to build relationships with local businesses, charities, community groups, sports clubs and statutory organisations.

YOUNG PEOPLE SAY...

In a recent survey by young people, for young people, in Blackpool, 70% pupils had increased negative feelings about transitioning to another year, suggesting they might need a bit of extra support before September (Blackpool Headstart, 2020).

Key ideas to build into a whole school approach (Covid-19 specific)

In addition to the key ideas outlined in pages 18-20 of the main guide that underpin effective whole school approaches, we would suggest additional planning in these specific areas:

Table 1: Key ideas underpinning effective whole school approaches to resilience, adapted from the Academic Resilience Audit Tool for Senior Leaders (Boingboing, 2013).

Key idea	'Good' looks like...	Can be achieved by...
Curriculum planning, teaching and learning to promote resilience	Evidence from UNESCO suggests social and emotional learning is important for community healing following a crisis. Pupils access social and emotional learning skills (SEL) which helps them to navigate emotions, practice mindful engagement, exhibit pro-social behaviour and cope with daily challenges (Education Endowment Foundation, 2019).	Staff receive additional training in SEL (Early intervention Foundation, 2018) principles and take opportunities to model and praise SEL skills.
	Pupils learn the new school routines and reconnect with their peers. Pupils explore relationships, how circumstances can affect them and how to rebuild them.	Help seeking is modelled and encouraged and a range of help is clearly signposted - for instance at handwashing facilities including social media, phone, and mental health drop–in sessions.
	Pupils use creative lessons to process thoughts, feelings and experiences and acquire rich vocabulary to express a range of emotions.	Use visual reminders and calm discussion to reinforce relevant school routines and discuss the rationale for introducing new routines.
		Avoid high stakes exams but use a variety of methods to access pupils understanding and assess gaps (i.e. low stake quizzes). Celebrate what has been learned and respond in a way that avoids a sense of failure.
	Pupils feel secure that they can continue to progress in their learning and have acquired useful skills during their time away from school.	Be open and honest about the pandemic in an age appropriate way, highlighting stories that give hope and community connectivity.
		Allow as much flexibility as possible with reintegration back into the classroom and lessons. Provide opportunities for pupils to communicate their fears in anonymous boxes or using case studies about other children.
	Pupils learning from home continue to access high quality work and have opportunities to connect with peers.	Provide sufficient time for teachers to plan for those learning at home.

YOUNG PEOPLE SAY...

In a recent survey by young people, for young people, in Blackpool, young people suggested support groups, 1-1 time with tutors, patience, understanding, reassurance, and time to get used to the changes (Blackpool Headstart, 2020).

Key idea	'Good' looks like...	Can be achieved by...
Staff development to support their own wellbeing and that of students	Staff resilience and wellbeing is considered a priority in the school. Staff are able to seek help or advice if they feel anxious or concerned. Staff remain curious, open and flexible. They are able to reflect on reasons for pupils behaving in particular ways and work with pupils to find positive solutions. Staff understand the protocols and procedures relating to Covid–19 and are able to signpost pupils and parents to support. All staff feel valued and confident to adapt to changing circumstances including those who are shielding at home.	Providing time for reflection and learning about resilience and protective factors. Senior leaders support and model self-care. Help seeking is actively encouraged. The Education Support website offers a good starting point (Education Support, 2020). The Education Support Helpline: 09000 062561 offers confidential mental health support and could be prominently displyed (Education Support, 2020). Nurturing and relationships is kept at the heart of what schools are trying to do. It is modelled between staff and central to conversations about pupils. Develop peer support/buddy models within and between schools. Encourage staff to access online training (e.g. Ambition Institute, 2020) focused on mental health and trauma (e.g. The fight flight freeze response, 2016). Involving staff in decision making and clear communication about strategies for keeping everyone safe. Celebration and feedback for everyday achievements. Senior leaders model curiosity and a non-judgemental approach.
Working with parents/carers	Parents and carers are fully engaged in the plans for re-engagement. Parents are key players in the school community and their views and concerns are actively sought, heard, and responded to. Parents and carers are helped to support their children at home with learning and emotional recovery. School maintains relationships with families throughout lockdown and parents/carers feel well informed about all plans.	Invite ideas and action from parents using a variety of methods to reach more parents (e.g. parent/carer survey to ascertain concerns about returning to school). Communicate openly and regularly with parents/carers using a variety of formats and visual aids (Charlie Waller Memorial Trust, 2020) signposting to help and detailing safety measures taken. Pupils and parents are able to have a video contact or phone call with their new teacher prior to returning. Introduce mechanisms for parents/carers to share useful information to enable staff to understand any negative experiences during lockdown which may impact on their child's mental health. Be mindful of families facing financial pressures (e.g. relax uniform requirements, supply learning materials). Involve parents/carers in the planning of increased opening of schools, including the voices of parents/carers of children who have been attending school throughout.

Key idea	'Good' looks like...	Can be achieved by...
Pupil voice/co-production with students	Pupils have a sense of agency and contribute ideas which shape the new protocols at school.	Ask pupils already attending school for ideas about re-engaging more pupils. Staff use calls with pupils at home to gather ideas as well as welfare checks and learning feedback. Displaying Thoughts, Feelings and Action boxes in prominent positions to gather pupil input. Reinforce student councils and Resilience Committees to ensure that school plans are co-produced. Include the voice of pupils who remain at home.
Provision of targeted pupil support	Early intervention and individualised support provided for pupils who are not thriving. Triage system to effectively use staff to support pupils with different levels of need. Transition plans are revised to allow appropriate endings and preparation for the new year. Transition processes are managed so that pupils are confident about their new teachers and new routines.	Use a visual timetable every morning to reassure the children how the day will look. For example, use a Now and Next board to display activities. Consider how to reduce stigma for vulnerable children who have been attending school throughout lockdown. Adapt support for pupils remaining at home. Consider screening all pupils using emotional wellbeing screening tools, and matching with soft data (teacher observations) to identify levels of need. Provide targeted support for those pupils with identified needs – e.g. school counsellor, learning mentor, peer support system, trusted adult etc. engaging with parents/carers along the way. Connect transitioning pupils and students to their new teacher and possibly peers prior to return. Create opportunities to mark the ending of their current year/school. Create a video clip of the new building and/or new protocols for washing hands and physical distancing (with paper copy for those without online access).

Table 1: Key ideas underpinning effective whole school approaches to resilience, adapted from the Academic Resilience Audit Tool for Senior Leaders (Boingboing, 2013).

3. Supporting children and young people through common mental health issues in the context of COVID-19

As we discuss in detail in the main guide (on page 2 and 21 in particular), definitions and diagnoses of mental health difficulties is a very complex and controversial area. It is important to remember that increased feelings of distress are a very normal reaction to a very abnormal situation. However, for some children and young people - for example children or young people with existing mental health difficulties, or who have experienced bereavement, domestic violence, financial insecurity or trauma - distress levels may increase to such an extent that it impacts daily functioning. The information below provides some additional suggestions and information to identify and support pupils with increased mental health difficulties. If concerns remain, even after targeted support, or if mental health difficulties are having a significant impact on a pupil's daily functioning consider referring to specialist mental health services.

Anxiety

Anxiety has an important job to do during this pandemic. Anxiety reminds us to stay physically distant and wash our hands regularly. However, if our anxiety becomes too overwhelming it stops being helpful and can have a severe impact on our daily life.

Table 2: Ways to support children and young people experiencing anxiety.

Additional challenge	Ways to support children and young people
A pupil may be showing signs of increased anxiety – excessive worry, being withdrawn, or avoiding certain situations, overthinking problems, clinginess, school refusal, irritability or excessive tearfulness	• Enable the pupil to access a trusted adult to talk to about their worries. Suggest they write a diary to help identify triggers, scaling the intensity of the anxiety on a scale of 0-10. What would help reduce the anxiety by 1 scale? • Suggest a safe space they can go to where they can have some physical distance if they are concerned about re-entering a classroom with other pupils. • Allow pupils to come in before other pupils return to rehearse the new arrangements for physical distancing and hand washing. The more exposure to the environment the less anxiety-provoking it will become. • Regular check in with the pupil. In the absence of toys and books in the classroom, children could have their own comfort bag with personal toys, books, bubbles and other self-soothing materials inside. • Practice breathing techniques and mindfulness, there are many on-line resources that could help. Help the pupil do regular body scans to relax muscles. • Help the pupil understand fight, flight or freeze responses (e.g. The fight flight freeze response, 2016). • Use distraction techniques (whatever the pupil finds useful - it could be a colouring exercise or having a job to do).

Additional challenge	Ways to support children and young people
A pupil may become hypervigilant about their health and obsessive about hand washing and hygiene	• If handwashing is becoming an issue and causing distress for the child, make a plan with them to limit the frequency and duration of handwashing. • Plan to do something immediately after handwashing as a distraction. • Encourage the use of handcream after washing to prevent chapped skin. • Make a plan with the child how they can manage the school day (i.e. opening doors, sharing resources) without drawing undue attention from other pupils.

Table 2: Ways to support children and young people experiencing anxiety.

Further resources and support for managing anxiety during the Covid-19 pandemic:

- www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/#collapse75f3c
- https://www.ocduk.org/ocd-and-coronavirus-survival-tips/
- https://dulwichcentre.com.au/wp-content/ uploads/2020/03/Lived-wisdom-on-panic.pdf
- https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/tips-for-coping-with-ocd-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/
- https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-school-refusal/

Low mood

The nation is currently experiencing extreme restrictions on all activities; socialising, family life, school and work and there are changes in financial circumstances and uncertainty about the future. It is not surprising therefore, that we might be experiencing fluctuating low moods.

Table 3 - Ways to support children and young people experiencing low mood

Additional challenge	Ways to support children and young people
A pupil may be feeling isolated and lonely. There is a strong link between feeling lonely and low mood	• Make time in the day to enable friends to reconnect. • Encourage children to support each other through curriculum activities using a buddy system or peer support model. • Provide classroom opportunities for group work, giving consideration to matching quiet children together.
A pupil may have experienced additional stressors on family life such as unemployment, financial difficulties, or an increase in caring responsibilities or family conflict, all of which can increase low mood	• Be aware of particular challenges that families may have experienced by staying connected. • Assist families by signposting to relevant support i.e. CAB.

Additional challenge	Ways to support children and young people
A pupil may be showing symptoms of a low mood – lack of energy, negative outlook, forgetfulness, tiredness, tearfulness, loss of interest, anger or a lack of self-care	• Physical activity is a good mood enhancer. Make plans with the pupil to increase their physical activity and fresh air. • Connect the pupil with other young people, using a buddy or peer support system. • Help the pupil make a plan to increase the activities they used to enjoy. • Encourage the pupil to connect with nature - going for walks, looking at photographs, growing plants. • Enable the pupil to talk to a trusted adult about their mood. Keeping a mood diary can be useful to monitor mood and triggers and noting down daily achievements can also help improve self esteem (Vivyan, 2010). • A good sleep routine can help improve our mood. For handy hints see the NHS pages on tips to improve sleep (NHS, 2020).

Table 3 - Ways to support children and young people experiencing low mood

Further resources and support for managing low mood during the Covid-19 pandemic:

- https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/looking-after-yourself/coronavirus-and-mentalhealth/#my-mood-is-low-because-of-all-the-bad-news-
- Domestic violence National Helpline: https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/
- Citizen's Advice Bureau: https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/
- Online support for young people: https://www.kooth.com/

Trauma and loss

Some children and young people may find the Covid-19 pandemic to be a traumatic experience, particularly if they feel out of control, unsafe, fearful for the safety of family or loved ones, overwhelmed or shocked. Under-standing about Covid-19 and how the world is managing the pandemic (in an age-appropriate way) is useful to manage the shock and fear that lots of people will experience. However, for children and young people who have had previous traumatic experiences in their lives, previous thoughts and feelings around the previous trauma may also reappear. Sadly, some children and young people will experience loss of a loved one during this pandemic.

Table 4: Ways to support children and young people experiencing trauma and loss.

Additional challenge	Ways to support children and young people
Covid-19 pandemic might be a traumatic experience for children and young people for lots of different reasons. It may affect sleep, attention, increase irritability and the child or young person may become more hyper aroused	• Remember that lots of symptoms will reduce over time. • Connect pupils together who have had similar experiences - support from others who have had similar experiences can be very reassuring. • Enable the pupil to have quiet time if needed. • Talk about what has happened - this helps the pupil make sense of their experiences. • Maintain close contact with parents/carers so the pupil has similar approaches of support in both home and school environments.

Additional challenge	Ways to support children and young people
A child or young person may be experiencing loss of a loved one to Covid-19 at a time when normal grieving processes are restricted	• Provide bereavement and loss training/awareness for staff. • Enable the pupil to choose a trusted adult in the school who can support them. • Allow the pupil space and time to process what has happened. Grieving takes time. • Ensure that all school staff are aware of the pupil's support needs. • Reach out for support if needed - resources, information and helplines are available.
Children and young people who have experienced previous traumas in their life may have these traumas re-triggered. They might have increased flashbacks, nightmares, feel anxious, unsafe and isolated	• Reassure the pupil and acknowledge what is happening. • Support the pupil in revisiting all the techniques that have previously been helpful - e.g. writing a journal, creative writing, art, ways to self soothe, connecting with people who can support them, helping others, listening to music, going for a run or a walk. • Support the pupil to stay in the moment - try breathing exercises, tensing and relaxing muscles one at a time, noticing nature. • Make a 'safe space' for the pupil in the classroom - this could be a den or a pile of cushions where they can go when they feel fearful. • Connect the pupil with others who have had similar experiences.

Table 4: Ways to support children and young people experiencing trauma and loss.

Further resources and support for managing trauma and loss during the Covid-19 pandemic:

Resources for managing trauma:
• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msNO7ZmLXns&feature=youtu.be
• http://www.safehandsthinkingminds.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/trauma-informedvalues-in-covid.pdf
• https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/flashbacks.htm

Resources for managing loss:
• https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/
• https://www.childbereavementuk.org/

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