



## Meeting with your children and young people again: Focusing on wellbeing before the end of term

We know that during the COVID-19 outbreak you've been doing all you can to engage and contact your children and young people with remote education, phone calls and even chats through the window. Now that schools have the flexibility to invite pupils in for a face-to-face meeting before the end of this term, it's a good opportunity to check-in on students wellbeing. This would need to be in line with wider protective measures guidance, and guidance for secondary schools on the numbers of pupils permitted on-site at any one time.

This leaflet is for teachers who want to do this, and provides advice, information and access to further resources.

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### Impact on children and young people's wellbeing:

As you know, children and young people may be experiencing a variety of emotions in response to the COVID-19 outbreak such as anxiety, stress or low mood. It is important to contextualise these feelings as normal responses to an abnormal situation.

Some children and young people may need a listening ear or welcome reassurance about support to re-adjust to school; others may have enjoyed being at home and be reluctant to return to school; some may be showing signs of more severe anxiety or depression. A meeting with a familiar teacher will help to reassure them ahead of their return to school in September.

### Preparing for a conversation

- **MindEd** provides a free learning platform for professionals, which includes a [Coronavirus Staff Resilience Hub](#) with materials on peer support, stress, fear and trauma and bereavement.
- **Relationship, Sex and Health Education** training modules for teachers to support them to prepare to deliver content on mental health and wellbeing. The [training module](#), which has been developed with clinical experts and schools, will improve teacher confidence in talking and teaching about mental health and wellbeing. It was published early given the importance of supporting pupils' mental health and wellbeing at this time.

These 'check-in' sessions can also help to inform schools thinking about what they will need to do in preparation for wider reopening. In support of that, the Department for Education, in collaboration with NHS England and Public Health England, will be hosting a free webinar for school and college staff on **9 July** on how to support returning pupils and students. You will hear from experts on the impacts of the outbreak on children and young people's mental wellbeing and recovery techniques, and from education leaders about the actions they have been taking. For further information and to sign-up: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/110796856380>

## Key points to consider during check-ins with children and young people

- **Listen and acknowledge:** Children and young people may respond to stress in different ways, and they may feel less anxious if they are able to express and communicate their feelings in a safe and supportive environment.
- **Be aware of your own reactions:** Remember that children and young people often take their emotional cues from the important adults in their lives, so how you respond to the situation is very important. It is important you're aware of your own emotions and remain calm, listen to and acknowledge their concerns, and answer any questions they have honestly.
- **Provide clear information about the situation:** We know that children, young people and parents need to feel safe to return to school. Take time to listen to any concerns they might have and provide further information on the steps being taken in your school to achieve this safely and effectively.
- **Make sure they know how to find further information if needed:** There is a lot of misleading information online that can cause additional concern for children and young people. There are links to reliable sources of information and support overleaf.
- **Be particularly alert to the emotional wellbeing needs of children with SEND:** They may have found the outbreak especially challenging, and/or may display emotional wellbeing needs in different ways.

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### Other sources of advice on mental health and wellbeing

- Children and young people can access free confidential support anytime from Government-backed voluntary and community sector organisations by:
  - **texting SHOUT to 85258**
  - **calling Childline on 0800 1111**
  - **calling the Mix on 0808 808 4994**
- Children and young people can also find online information on COVID-19 and mental health on the **Young Minds website**.
- For support with an eating disorder, children and young people can ring **Beat's Youthline on 0808 801 0711**.
- The **Think Ninja** (freely available and adapted for COVID-19) app educates 10-18 year olds about mental health, emotional wellbeing and provide skills young people can use to build resilience and stay well.
- **Rise Above** (adapted for COVID-19) website aims to build resilience and support good mental health in young people aged 10 to 16.
- The **SEND Gateway** is a good source of information for professionals, containing resources on responding appropriately to children and young people with SEND with emotional wellbeing needs.

### Seeking more specialist support if needed

- Schools are encouraged to continue referring to their local **children and young people's mental health services** (CYPMHS) where needed. CYPMHS (previously CAMHS) are continuing to operate and in many cases are providing support remotely. Children and young people or their parents or carers can also contact their GP or refer to **NHS 111 online**. Local CYPMH services will also have information on access on their websites: many offer self-referral or single points of access.
- **NHS trusts** have established 24-hour urgent mental health helplines in most parts of England for people of all ages. If you have urgent concerns about a child or young person, you can find your local helpline **here** to discuss these with a mental health professional.
- And remember to refer to your **local children's services** if you have any safeguarding concerns.