

Supporting Children, Young People and their Families

There is a great deal of information, coverage and opinion circulating at the moment. This document aims to provide reliable advice, information and a list of trustworthy links for supporting children, young people and their families during this time.

Supporting Children and Young People to understand the current situation

Children and young people are hearing a lot about COVID-19 and normal life will be disrupted over the next few months for all of us. The extensive media coverage provides helpful information, but this can also be overwhelming, and it is natural that children and young people may worry about themselves, family members and friends.

Parents and other family members can be a great help when children and young people become anxious, and there are some reliable resources which can support adults in providing this help.

Good information is key, and avoiding scare stories on social media is really important at this time.

The following is provided by the World Health Organisation:

- *Avoid watching, reading or listening to news that causes you to feel anxious or distressed; seek information mainly to take practical steps to prepare your plans and protect yourself and loved ones. Seek information updates at specific times during the day once or twice. The sudden and near-constant stream of news reports about an outbreak can cause anyone to feel worried. Get the facts. Gather information at regular intervals, from WHO website and local health authorities platforms, in order to help you distinguish facts from rumours.*
- *Protect yourself and be supportive to others.*
- *Help children express their feelings. Every child has his/her own way to express emotions. Sometimes engaging in a creative activity, such as playing and drawing can facilitate this process. Children feel relieved if they can express and communicate their feelings in a safe and supportive environment.*
- *Maintain familiar routines in daily life as much as possible. Provide engaging age appropriate activities for children.*

Some things you could look at together with your child:

A website dedicated to information and support relating to our current situation. This will be continually updated and links added to information you can trust:

<https://young.scot/campaigns/national/coronavirus>

This is an age appropriate news source:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51204456>

This clip is called: "Advice if you're upset by the news". It will help children to know that their feelings are a natural response to the unusual situation

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/13865002>

Supporting children and young people with existing mental health difficulties

Some children and young people may already have difficulties with their mental health and are already receiving treatment from services.

They may become extremely anxious about the current situation and may develop new or more severe anxiety symptoms. It is really important that they are helped to use any coping strategies they may have already developed through work with counsellors, clinicians or others who support them like relaxation exercises, distraction or use of a worry box etc.

If they are taking prescribed medicine, it is important that they continue to take this regularly as prescribed and that repeat prescriptions are arranged well in advance.

If they are attending Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) or another support service, the clinicians or professionals they see may arrange to speak to them over the telephone or through a secure conference call instead of bringing them into clinics.

If their usual clinician is on leave or is deployed to another service, there may be arrangements for cover from other people in the service.

Pupils currently attending these supports are already aware of the ways in which they can access their supports. If you require any information on this, please contact your child's Pupil Support Teacher or a member of the Senior Management Team.

Parents or carers who are worried about their child's mental health should contact their clinic directly for advice, rather than presenting with their child to an A and E department.

Many organisations are developing information and resources specifically for people who are living with specific mental illnesses. We will continue to share relevant information via our communication channels.

This clip discusses parents and carers looking after their mental health and ideas to reduce worry in children:

<https://youtu.be/ZnANLAcPRZ4>

Information about managing children and young people's anxiety

- <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/helping-children-copewith-stress-print.pdf>
- <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/mental-health/anxietydisorders-in-children>
- <https://www.handsonscotland.co.uk/anxiety>

Supporting children and young people with autism, neurodevelopmental disorders and/or learning disability

Some children or young people will find the raised anxiety levels at home, school or in their community hard to manage and if schools are closed, this will place particular pressure on their families.

Parents and carers will know best what helps their children when they are worried and trying to keep them busy and active as much as possible is best.

Relaxation and self-soothing strategies are useful and trying to make the change in routine, and the need for frequent hand washing, fun might be difficult but can bring down anxiety levels.

Easy read information:

<https://www.enable.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID19-ES15- Coronavirus-Easy-Read-1.pdf>

Hand washing tips for people with sensory difficulties

<https://www.sensoryintegration.org.uk/News/8821506>

Looking after the adults

This is a difficult time for everyone, and we all need to look after ourselves and each other.

Accessing trustworthy sources of information is important in understanding what actions you can take to protect yourself and others.

For parents and carers, it will also allow you to confidently share accurate information with your child.

Taking steps to look after your mental health are good for you, your family and those you look after. Taking time out from work and the media coverage will be a positive way to manage anxiety. Getting outdoors into green spaces is a therapeutic for people of all ages.

Some links to help look after your mental health

- <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-healthduring-coronavirus-outbreak>
- <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing>