

## **CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

### **ADVICE TO SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES TO REACH OUT TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH HIDDEN VULNERABILITIES**

There is much guidance in the public domain about supporting vulnerable children and young people who are attending schools and colleges at present and those who are, with local authority and school/college approval, isolating at home. ASCL has produced additional guidance in our [FAQs](#).

However, we are increasingly being asked by school and college leaders about good practice in supporting those with hidden vulnerabilities who are isolated in their own homes during the coronavirus outbreak. These are the children and young people who leaders and their staff know are struggling emotionally during the isolation period at home; those who are not formally recorded as vulnerable but who would, under normal circumstances, be supported by leaders and their staff in schools and colleges.

This guidance sets out some principles and priorities for supporting children and young people with hidden vulnerabilities and their families and includes good practice examples and links to some organisations that may be able to help.

#### **Principles and Priorities: Reaching out to our children and young people**

- **Put children and young people first:** identify which of your children and young people fit into this category and identify staff who can check that they and their families are managing.
- **Adapt your usual strategies for addressing disadvantage** to reach out to those who have hidden vulnerabilities: where support would normally be offered at school or college, is there a way that this can now be offered at a distance?
- **Be aware of potential mental health issues** in the child/young person or their family arising from a situation where people are socially isolated for long periods: does the pupil/student have access to friends online or by phone? Could you set up a pupil/student support group?
- **Offer links to relevant health, wellbeing and support:** is someone in your organisation providing links to counselling, helplines/resources etc via the usual channels to parents?
- **Connect families, children and young people to positive role models,** self-help groups and places offering advice and support, such as [Samaritans](#), [Childline](#), [Actionline](#), government and local authority websites.
- **Don't underestimate the impact** on some children and young people of exams they had been preparing for being cancelled and assessment being done in a different way.
- **Don't underestimate the impact of the current situation** on those young people who had set their heart on an apprenticeship, only to find fewer apprenticeship vacancies, learning curtailed and more struggling businesses.
- **Consider including hidden vulnerabilities in your safeguarding policy** and taking action with available staff who are willing to support those whom you and they know are struggling emotionally.

#### **Examples from schools and colleges giving priority to young people with hidden vulnerabilities**

- Members of staff/counselling staff available to take calls from those who are 'worried'.
- Involving older children and young people in thinking of ways they can support others e.g. painting rainbows and putting up in their windows, sharing examples of craft online and similar activities enjoyed by all ages.
- Links to mindfulness art worksheets for downtime.
- Encouraging sharing of Spotify playlists.
- Links to fitness workouts at a set time each day (sharing links for children and young people to suit different ages and interests, for example sport, yoga, pilates, PE, martial arts, tai chi).
- Creative thinking of ways to keep engagement high with the world beyond home/bedroom.

## Helping children and young people reach out and connect with experiences beyond their bedroom

[The British Museum](#)

[Wizards World | Harry Potter at home](#)

[Science Museum](#)

David Walliams is now posting a [15-minute reading](#) every day

[Edinburgh Zoo tiger cam](#)

### Sharing links to sites that can offer support for those who may be worried, anxious or lonely and don't want to talk directly to school

- [Mind website](#)
- [Five ways to wellbeing](#)
- [Action for happiness coping calendar](#)
- Anna Freud has a list of resources for mentally healthy schools. There is some excellent [advice for young people](#) from Peter Fuggle of the Anna Freud Centre.
- Some schools and colleges use online support packages, e.g. JISC and Kooth online. [Kooth](#) offers free, safe and anonymous online support for young people's mental health. Young people can have a text-based conversation with a qualified counsellor. Counsellors are also available 12noon to 10pm weekdays and 6pm-10pm at weekends.
- [Place 2 Be](#) wellbeing resources for schools and families

### Peer to peer

- Asking pupils to be kind online and look out for your classmates.
- Pupils encouraged to send positive artworks and messages to each other.
- Communication about learning resource for young people, such as those mentioned above.
- Online surgeries for those who are struggling with set work.
- Online practical demonstrations of skills.
- Student forums supporting each other.
- Student ambassadors "reaching out" to those who may be struggling emotionally.
- Providing a (skeleton) student support function and helpline for young people to call if they need help or advice.
- Offering hints and tips for survival during the time of isolation.

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