

### Issues and implications

The full impact of Covid-19 on CYP will not be known for many years to come and at present we can't predict how CYP will respond during transition or what the long term effects will be.

Whilst many will adapt to new changes and routines and cope well, some CYP may find this much harder and will require more targeted intervention.

Children returning to school may need more support than they did before, and children who were previously coping may not be now.

Schools should therefore monitor the needs of some CYP very closely so that appropriate support can be provided.

These CYP could include but are not limited to:

- Students with existing social, emotional and mental health needs (some of which will have EHCPs)
- SEND pupils with or without an EHCP such as children with significant learning needs, communication difficulties or Autism
- CYP who are experiencing or have experienced adversity such as domestic abuse, neglect or poverty
- Children In Need or those with a Child Protection Plan
- Looked After Children
- CYP who have experienced loss or bereavement
- CYP who have been shielding due to underlying health issues
- Refugee children
- CYP who are already experiencing emotionally based school refusal

# 80%

of young people who already had mental health needs, said Covid-19 had made their mental health condition worse in varying degrees.

- 41% of children said their mental health needs were much worse as a result of Covid-19.
- Many young people were anxious about family members being ill or themselves passing COVID-19 onto more vulnerable family members.
- The return to a school or setting may well heighten concerns about becoming ill or infecting others.
- Be aware that many more children may have developed anxiety as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare for this in advance.

Young Minds, April 2020

## Strategies and signposting

- Remember for many vulnerable CYP and their families, access to external services or support may have stopped or been postponed during lockdown. **Support networks will need to be rebuilt for pupils and it will take time for them to be effective again.**
- **Make sure key staff are accessible and that CYP know where they can go for support.**
- **Be prepared to be flexible and make arrangements to adapt or reduce demands as necessary.** This will be particularly important for CYP who were struggling to attend school before the lockdown.
- Keep communicating with CYP and their parents. Make parents aware of external agency support available through SENDIASS. [www.specialneedsjungle.com](http://www.specialneedsjungle.com) has a range of useful resources to support SEND pupils and their families at this time.
- **Allow more time for your SENDCo and Inclusion Staff** to respond to the needs of CYP who require more support.
- Focus on creating a nurturing environment and ensure adults understand the needs of CYP who are displaying signs of trauma by creating whole school awareness. For training see [www.em-edsupport.org.uk](http://www.em-edsupport.org.uk) or implement a **PACE** approach:
  - **Playfulness** - e.g personalised greetings in the mornings, being silly, sharing jokes.
  - **Acceptance** - e.g "I know you're scared about being here" or "It must be hard not to think of your parents at home. You loved spending so much time with them every day and it's sad to leave them".
  - **Curiosity** - e.g. "I've noticed you've been quiet since coming back. I think you might be worried about something".
  - **Empathy** - e.g. showing them that we 'get it'. We might say "I know this is really tough for you. The classroom looks so different from the last time you were here".
- Use talking mats for CYP who struggle to communicate or articulate how they are feeling. The **NAIT 'Ok, Not OK Board'** can be accessed through [www.autismtoolbox.co.uk](http://www.autismtoolbox.co.uk). Details and signposting on responding to anxiety can be found in *Module 2*. In addition, **use glitter bottles, finger breathing and the strategy of 'If and then': "If that happens what will you do?"**
- Consider therapeutic ways of working - art, Drawing and Talking ([www.drawingandtalking.com](http://www.drawingandtalking.com)), therapeutic play activities such as puppets, story, small world play, drama and music or read therapeutic stories together.
- Emotion Coaching ([www.emotioncoachinguk.com](http://www.emotioncoachinguk.com)) helps CYP regulate their emotions by:
  1. Becoming aware of the child's emotions
  2. Recognising the emotion as an opportunity for intimacy and teaching
  3. Listening empathetically, validating the child's feelings
  4. Helping the child find words to label the emotion
  5. Setting limits and explore strategies to solve the problem at hand

### Links from the presentation:

- What is meant by PACE? [DDP network](#)
- Hope Clouds [Young Minds](#)
- Social stories blog [Read Teach Learn Think](#)
- The Little Elf and the Flowers of Hope and Bravery [Nottinghamshire EPS](#)

# Strategies and signposting

- For CYP with Autism:
  - **Contact parents to discuss their experience of lockdown so personal profiles and sensory needs can be updated.**
  - Plan transition support so parents and children are aware of changes and use visual information such as photo books or a personalised social story that can be used before they return to school.
  - Allow the pupil time to regulate their sensory needs and provide breaks from both social and curriculum demands.
  - **Additional opportunities for 'breaks' or 'chill time' (planned and responsive), where the child can follow their own agenda for short periods of time.** These should be communicated visually using a means appropriate to the child (Objects of Reference, Visual Timetable, Break Cards etc).
  - Use **social stories** to support new hygiene rules in place and understanding of social distancing.
  - Be aware that CYP with Autism may be experiencing additional anxieties due to the rapid changes at school and home as a result of Covid-19. **Reintroduce structure and new routines as soon as possible.**

## Additional information on supporting CYP with Autism can be found at:

- National Autistic Society <http://www.starsteam.org.uk/coronavirus-resources>
- Autism Education Trust [www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk](http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk)
- [www.schudio.tv/courses/preparing-autistic-send-children-for-going-back-to-school](http://www.schudio.tv/courses/preparing-autistic-send-children-for-going-back-to-school)
- <https://www.autism.org.uk/services/helplines/coronavirus/resources.aspx>
- [www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk](http://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk)

## More links SEND support:

- <https://www.ndcs.org.uk/covid-19-coronavirus-support-for-deaf-children/>
- Returning to school guidance for children with hearing loss or vision impairment [Sensory Leaflet](#)
- [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)
- For CYP with severe learning difficulties:  
<https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/information/covid19information.html#Infosheets>
- Top Phrases for calming Anxious children, Pooky Knightsmith, [YouTube](#)
- Calmer classrooms: [A guide to working with traumatised children](#) Published by the Child Safety Commissioner, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, June 2007

## References

- Transition, Recovery and Learning in the aftermath of a Pandemic, Bi-Borough Educational Psychology Consultation Service.
- COVID-19 advice for schools – Transition and back to school, Wakefield Educational Psychology Service.

## Applied Psychologies

COVID-19 Transitions Pack

MODULE 1 Communication During Transition

MODULE 2 Staff and Pupil Wellbeing

MODULE 3 Settling to Learn

**MODULE 4 SEND and Vulnerable Children**