

# **Supporting Wellbeing and Learning for Children and Young People with SEND: A Guide for Families**

**Barnsley Education Inclusion Services**  
**Barnsley Educational, Child and Community Psychology Service**

# Learning at home: Information for Parents and Carers





# Learning Through Positive Experiences

- For many parents, planning and delivering structured learning opportunities on a daily basis is unfamiliar and may provoke anxiety.
- Children may find it difficult to respond to parents in 'teacher' role.
- As parents and carers we can adapt skills we already have to continue to help our children learn and develop.
- E.g. Learning through practical, creative and physical experiences such as arts and crafts, walks in nature, baking, dancing, preparing meals together, gardening, ball games, board games, making forts, treasure hunts etc.



# Learning Through Positive Experiences

- We have a wealth of opportunities to develop children's understanding and knowledge about the world through language and experience.
- As parents and carers, we have a huge amount of experience of teaching our children – we have already taught them so many skills. We know our children well and what helps them feel positive and enjoy learning.
- Through sharing everyday experiences, talking together about those experiences, tuning in to each other's emotions we are further developing our relationships and it is through those relationships that learning happens.



# Structuring the day

- Parents and carers should not feel pressure to replicate the school day- aim to create a balance between free time and learning.
- Expect some learning each day but adapt how and when this is completed to meet your child's learning style. They may find it easier to complete learning tasks little and often with breaks in between rather than completing lots of tasks for large chunks of time.





# Managing Emotions



- When children are finding it difficult to engage in learning, consider what messages your child is giving you through their behaviour.
- Behaviours can indicate that they might be feeling stressed, upset, excited, wanting attention, wanting to be left alone or to feel in control.



- You can help your child to notice and to regulate their emotions by 'wondering aloud', for example, "I've noticed you are finding this difficult; I wonder if you are feeling worried today about..."

# Developing Confidence in Learning: Growth Mindset

- You can support your children to take on learning challenges by being clear about what they are expected to do, make it safe for them to make mistakes as part of learning, and communicate your confidence in their abilities.
- This is a 'Growth Mindset' approach.



# Structuring Learning

- When supporting your children's learning, find a quiet space. Use short activities and break them up with appealing, lower demand activities.
- Model approaches to tasks and share your thinking with your child.
- Make it clear what the end of a task will look like and give positive feedback. Keep language clear and concise.
- Revisit learning from the previous day and give your child opportunities to practise new skills. This gives plenty of opportunity then for children to notice their achievements, for you to celebrate success together and build independence.

- Within a busy school day our children often don't have time to practise skills to embed learning. Learning at home really gives you and your children that opportunity to slow the pace down; to practise and to 'over-learn' so children can develop mastery of skills.





## Increasing Motivation

- Link learning to their areas of interest where you can.
- Motivation and enjoyment is essential for storing new knowledge and skills in long term memory.
- Your child will create lasting meanings and connections between areas of knowledge when learning experiences are personally relevant to them.



- Children are more likely to engage in learning in which they feel have autonomy and choices.
- Involve children in choosing their learning experiences and planning activities for the next day. E.g., choosing activities from a 'menu', choose from activities on post it notes and schedule the order for the day by placing on a planner.

# Developing Skills

- Simply reading together and sharing a book creates a wealth of opportunities for language development.
- Asking questions about characters and events will support your child to make inferences and predictions, develop empathy and increase their knowledge and understanding of the world.
- Reading a text aloud with your child (paired reading approach) will support children to decode sounds in words and increase their ability to read fluently. For more information on Paired Reading click on link below

**[Link to paired reading](#)**



- Being at home throughout the day will give many parents and carers opportunities to support children to develop their independence skills, such as cooking, budgeting, decision making and self-care.

# Learning at Home: Useful Links

Home learning ideas for children with SEN

[Link to learning activities](#)

Early Years [Link to empowering little minds](#)

Useful Apps [Link to apps for children with SEN](#)

Barnsley Libraries offer a free e-book service to download on e-readers and tablets

[Link to Barnsley libraries](#)

Barnsley SENDIASS [Link to SENDIASS](#)

General SEN Guidance

[Link to government guidance on SEN education resources](#)



# Promoting Family Wellbeing



# Promoting Family Wellbeing

- The coronavirus pandemic has placed significant challenges on families, including trying to home school their children possibly whilst also juggling working from home.
- These challenges will likely create tensions at times for families who are spending long time together in small spaces and who are managing the feelings that come with living in such uncertain times.
- Psychological research on trauma has indicated the following coping strategies are important for adults and children during stressful situations.



# Keep Active

- When we are worried our brains prepare us to act and prompt us to move (fight or flight). This can be difficult when we are asked to stay indoors with stress hormones encouraging us to do something. Physical exercise and 'doing things' are very important for our wellbeing
- Exercise can be very effective in relieving stress; it releases endorphins (natural chemicals in the brain) that help us to feel happy.
- Consider developing a space in the house for some physical activity that can be done inside.



- Most children will benefit from breaks though out the day which activate their senses and provide sensory feedback. Workout or sensory schedules and charts may be helpful for some children.



## Keep Active: Useful Websites

The Parent Club- top tips for keeping active indoors, provides useful tips to help children burn off energy in the home: [Link to parent club](#)

Empowering Little Minds: Sensory ideas for primary and early years [Link to empowering little minds](#)

A Sensory Life: Lots of free sensory resources & tools [Link to a sensory life](#)

Sensory learning for young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties

[Link to sensory learning](#)

A composite image featuring a child sleeping peacefully with a brown teddy bear on a white pillow, framed in a circular shape with a blue, watercolor-like border. Above this, there is a semi-circular graphic divided into a green top half and a light green bottom half, also with a blue border. The background is white with faint blue watercolor splatters.

# Sleep and Eat Well

- Getting enough rest is important to our wellbeing. Try to keep a consistent bedtime routine and exercise good sleep hygiene (creating an environment and routine that helps us to get a good night's sleep).
- Trying to go to bed and getting up at a similar time each day can help with our sleep.

- **Information on sleep routines :**

- [Link to autismspeaks sleep advice](#)

- The children's sleep charity: The children's sleep charity has produced a range of helpful leaflets designed to help families with bedtime. These include leaflets to help create a calm bedroom, setting up a bedtime routine and some relaxation tips for bedtime. Leaflets can be found by following:

- [Link to childrenssleepcharity](#)

# Create Structure and Routine

- Having some structure and routine can help us feel that we have some control and ensures that there is some predictability in our own lives.
- This is particularly important when the world feels a little uncertain.
- Try to make a timetable for the day (visuals could be used to support child understanding of this)
- Children and young people can be involved in designing this. It could include some exercise, mealtimes, a learning activity from school, an opportunity to connect with friends and loved ones and some fun activities.



- **Visual stay at home kit and planner:**  
[Link to visual support resources](#)
- **Twinkl:** Twinkl has provided some visuals which could help to develop a timetable at home:  
[Link to visual timetable resources](#)



# Create Something to Look Forward To

- Put something in your diary or on your calendar that you and children are looking forward to .
- For example: family time; a fun exercise activity outside; making a favourite family meal together; an online play date with a friend; online gaming with a friend; a virtual cooking session with a family friend or relative or a virtual quiz.
- It may be for children and young people to create a list of the activities they miss and are looking forward to doing again soon.



# Maintaining Boundaries

- Keeping rules and boundaries in place helps children to feel safe. It makes them aware that adults are looking after them.
- While families are spending increasing time together in their homes, it can be difficult to find personal space.



- Identify spaces where each member of the family can be alone if they wish. If children share a room, agree times when they can have the room to themselves. Privacy is a basic need for children and adults.

# Finding Purpose

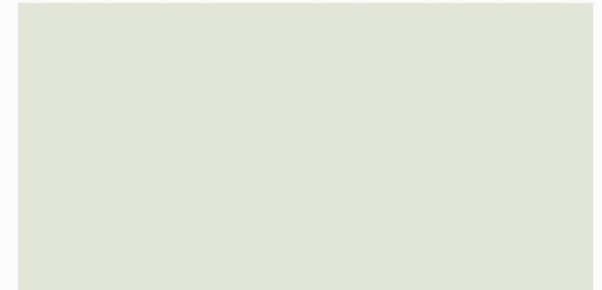
- Helping someone else benefits the person we help and us as an individual.
- Acts of charity and altruism help to restore a sense of positivity about the world, they also provide us with a sense of purpose which can help our own wellbeing.
- Facilitate and notice acts of tolerance and kindness by your children to increase family wellbeing.
- Planning your time and setting realistic goals of what you would like to achieve each day will increase your sense of purpose and wellbeing. Recognise that there will be good days where you manage to achieve all your goals and other days where this is not possible.





# Connect with others

- We are social beings and it is important that we can connect with others; that we feel seen, heard and attended to.
- Within the home families can create time to spend together: family meals and being silly, games, telling stories, dressing up.
- Children and young people should be supported to maintain meaningful and regular connections with those they are close to.
- Social media provides a great opportunity for young people to see and stay in touch with friends, family and teachers (this should continue to be monitored to ensure your children and young people are safe online). This contact can be included in your daily timetable or calendar.



# Dealing with Family Conflict

- Establish ground rules and boundaries and get the children involved in agreeing these where appropriate. These are more likely to be respected and followed if every member contributes towards them.
- You could even consider holding a family meeting to problem solve difficulties together. It is useful to consider that every individual's response to a stressful situation is unique and that we may not understand the kinds of worries the situation has evoked for our loved ones without asking them.
- Restorative practices can help to manage conflict between siblings by repairing harm and rebuilding relationships. Key questions from this approach are

**What happened?**

**What were you thinking about?'**

**How has this affected you?**

**What do you think needs to happen next?**

# Managing Anxiety for Children and Young People



For some children with additional needs and their carers, the current situation will provoke intrusive and uncomfortable levels of anxiety. This section contains suggestions for making anxiety more manageable.



## Encourage children to be open and honest with how they are feeling and allow them to feel their feelings



- It is important that children and young people can express and communicate their feelings in a safe and supportive environment.
- Every child has his or her own way of expressing emotions. For younger children, playing together may help to identify their concerns; children's play is often influenced by what they are thinking about.
- Older children may openly share their worries. You might notice that they find this easier during activities that help take some of the focus away; e.g., when you are washing up or during some colouring.
- It is important to label and to normalise worries.

- You can express some of your worries too if you are careful to share how you are managing them. E.g. You might tell them that when you get worried you find that distracting yourself helps you. (What you find distracting might not be distracting for them )

## Useful Links: Expressing Feelings

- Visual supports: Emotion cards can help some young people to identify, and communicate to others, how they are feeling. Some emotion cards can be found on Twinkl:

[Link to twinkle resources](#)

- Young Minds Website: provides some advice on talking to Young People expressing worry:

[Link to youngminds](#)

# Challenge/ Reframe Negative thoughts and Problem-solve with Children

- Reassure children and young people that their feelings and this situation will pass, that you are there for them and that you will get through it together.
- We can help children and young people to reflect on their feelings and to begin to think about the different things they can do that might make them feel safe or less worried.
- There are lots of things that we can't do now. Using 'unfortunately – fortunately' is a useful script to help come up with new things to do. Allow children or young people to express what they are missing (for example: unfortunately, I can't go to the playground) and begin to think about something nice they could do instead (for example: fortunately, I can build a den).
- If children have worries specific to their learning and education, it may be reassuring for them to hear that their teachers will help them to cover topics when they go back; they do not need to understand everything they are given now.
- Coping techniques for when you feel anxious, developed by child mind: [Link to youngminds and coping with anxiety](#)

# Social Media

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- With the recent news coverage, schools being closed and conversations at home it is very likely that children will have heard about coronavirus and that they may have questions about it.



- Helping children find answers to their questions, that are suitable for their level of understanding, can help ensure that they do not use their imagination to fill in any gaps (sometimes our imagination can make things seem worse than they are) and can help to ease their worry.

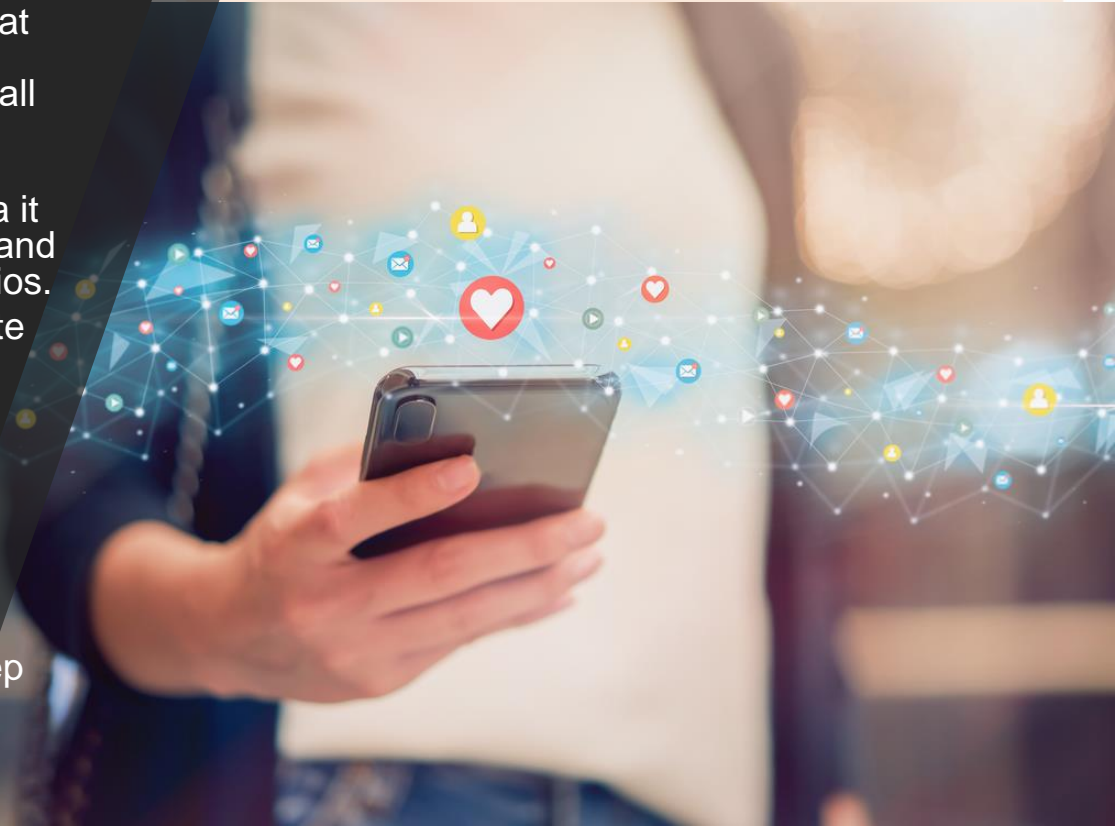


# Social Media

- Try to follow the following points when having a conversation:

- Listen to what your child is thinking and how they are feeling. Let them know that their feelings are OK.
- Offer reassurance that this situation is temporary and that you will get through it together. There are lots of people working to make sure that they are safe.
- Try to answer their questions in a way that is appropriate for their level of understanding. It's OK if you don't know all the answers but talking can help them to feel calm.
- From seeing clips of the news and media it is easy to fall into 'catastrophic' thinking and to concentrate on the worst-case scenarios.
- It is important that children have accurate information that reassures them of their safety.
- Help children and Young people to think about and identify 'the helpers'; all the people working to keep us safe. E.g. parents and teachers, scientists and doctors and nurses
- Help your children to have some control over the situation: e.g. It can help to keep themselves and others safe by washing their hands.

- To help answer your children's questions with factual, child friendly, news try looking at the Newsround website:
  - [Link to newsround](#)



# Positive News

- It can be helpful to draw attention to positive news stories about other things which are happening in the world, and acts of kindness being shown in our communities.
- Identifying positive things in their own day can be helpful too, try creating a diary or memory jar to record some of the things your family has enjoyed each day.
- Positive News Stories: Some positive news stories can be found by following this link:

[Link to BBCnewsstories](#)



# Finding ways to Promote Calm

## Find things that help children and young people to feel calm:

- It is important that we can participate in activities that help us to feel calm and happy during the day.
- These activities can be particularly helpful when children and young people begin to feel overwhelmed or worried.
- It is likely that you naturally do this for younger children; for example, when a child becomes upset that they can't have something you might distract them with an activity you know they enjoy.

- Older children and Young People can be encouraged to try different strategies and to think about what helps them to feel calm.
- They could choose one of these activities when they begin to feel worried (you might need to help guide them to do this).



# Calming Activities



## Calming activities could include:

- Breathing Exercises: Taking some slow, controlled breaths.
- Mindfulness exercises: Research suggests that mindfulness activities can reduce stress and anxiety, support concentration and improve sleep.
- Listening to music: Playing music that your child enjoys or finds calming.
- Doing a Yoga video.
- Relaxation scripts/ meditation.
- A self soothe box: A box filled with things that help you to feel relaxed. It might include, something to smell, something to touch, something to look at and maybe even something to taste.
- Going to a safe place: we all need some privacy and teenagers can crave this. Identify a space where individuals in your house can go to where they won't be disturbed. Agreeing a chair or a cosy corner where people will be left alone when sitting in the area can be helpful.
- Hugs
- Writing down or drawing their feelings and then 'letting them go'. Sometimes it helps to post worries into a finished box, or to tear them up to provide a physical ending.
- Concentrate on your senses: Concentrating on our five senses to keep us in the here and now can be helpful. For example, using your five fingers name five things you can, see, hear, smell, taste or touch.



# Resources to support anxiety management for children and young people

90 ideas during isolation developed by The Anna Freud Centre: 90 ideas for Young People who are feeling low or worried during isolation:

[Link to AnnaFreud](#)

Activities to help you feel calm, developed by Childline:

[Link to Childlinecalmingactivities](#)

Cosmic Kids Yoga: Cosmic kids Yoga uses stories and topics of interest to young children and uses these to teach Yoga: [Link to CosmickidsYoga](#)

Zones of Regulation:

[Link to zonesofregulation](#)

Smiling Mind: an App designed for 7-18 year olds:

[Link to smiling minds](#)

