

Looking after Families in Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole (BCP)

There is a lot of uncertainty around the current COVID-19 outbreak, particularly given that the situation is constantly developing and the information about the virus remains incomplete.

Understandably, this is causing a lot of worry and anxiety for people. Having children and young people at home, often when people are trying to work themselves, adds another layer of stress. It is therefore important to not only consider our physical health during such challenging times, but also to pay attention to our mental health. It is normal to feel worried, stressed and anxious when we are faced with uncertain situations, but the sooner we acknowledge and learn to take care of our mental health, the healthier and better equipped we'll be to cope with the situation we're having to face.

It is natural that concerns about coronavirus will make children and families anxious. Being concerned is appropriate and can result in us all taking actions that reduce the risk of illness. Children look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events. If parents / carers seem overly worried, children's anxiety may rise. Try to remain calm and reassure your children that health and school officials are working hard to help people to stay healthy.

Looking after yourself

As a parent / carer you may be concerned yourself. Take care of yourself and make sure you have breaks, time to relax, and ask for help from others if you need it.

Taking care of our mental health and checking in on others is something that we can all do, and we need to remember that by looking after our own mental health, we'll be best placed to look after our children.

Time is precious, especially when looking after children. However, try to plan your days or weeks to include something from each of the '5 ways to wellbeing' (developed by NEF)

BE ACTIVE

Try to make sure that you and your family get regular exercise every day. You Tube has lots of exercise videos for kids and adults. Get children involved in planning their own 'indoor PE'. If current government advice permits, try to get outside once a day either into your garden if you have one or in a place where there are few people. If you can't go out, open the windows for some fresh air and take some time to look at the world outside.

TAKE NOTICE

Take a break from the news and social media and concentrate on what's happening in the here and now in your family. Notice and appreciate the small things. Studies have shown that being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances your wellbeing. There's lots of good mindfulness apps to try, but if that's not for you, just getting into something you enjoy e.g. cooking, drawing etc and really focussing on it can be just as good.

CONNECT

Social connection is one of the most important ways that we can look after our mental wellbeing. Social distancing is going to make that trickier, but we're lucky enough to have technology to help us out. Think physical distancing, but social connections.

Social media is great, but if you can, try to have phone calls or even video calls. Arrange to Facetime/Skype a friend for coffee, phone relatives more often than usual.

Whilst it can be helpful to share worries, try to find other things to talk about too.

GIVE

Research tells us that giving back to our community helps people to feel valuable and makes us happier. We might not be able to contribute to our community in our usual way, but many people will still be able to find ways to give back.

Lots of community groups are setting up schemes that aim to help vulnerable people at this difficult time. If you want to get involved, check out local social media for ideas.

Many of us will not be in a position to offer practical support. We can still offer mutual support to friends and family by checking in with them regularly.

KEEP LEARNING

Learning a new skill or honing an existing one gives us a sense of purpose and achievement.

Whilst we're busy learning, we're less likely to experience anxious thoughts and worries.

Social-distancing will bring new challenges, but it will give many of us the time to start a new hobby or learn about an area that we've always been interested in.

Looking after your children

What you might see:

Remember that people react differently to significant events. Some people – adults and children – may feel worried, some excited, some nothing much at all. Be reassured that different reactions are normal and ok.

Some children and young people may need extra attention and may show their anxiety through their behaviour. They may:

- act younger than they are and be more clingy
- be anxious about family members who are away from the house
- demand more attention through their behaviour
- be restless or agitated and find it hard to concentrate
- blame others
- pretend not to be worried and / or not to care, when they are

For the most part, children will need what they've always needed; love, attention and opportunities to learn and play.

Tips for supporting children and young people:

While children and young people are home for long periods because of school closure, social-distancing or self-isolation, the following tips might be helpful:

Try and keep to a structure and routine that suits you. Well-known routines and structure in everyday life provides security and stability. Keep bedtime and morning routines close to existing ones to promote a sense of normality that children will find reassuring. Encouraging them to get up and dressed during the week will help maintain some difference between weekdays and weekends.

Keep boundaries firm and make it clear that you expect the same standards of behaviour as usual. Boundaries show that adults are still in control and taking care of them, which helps children to feel safe.

Make sure they get some time to burn off energy every day. Younger children will enjoy assault courses, discos etc. Older children and teens might respond better to fitness videos.

Expect children to do some learning every day. In the longer-term schools are likely to provide opportunities for online learning. In the short term, or as extra activities there are a wealth of helpful websites, many of which they will be able to access independently. Continuing with their learning helps promote a sense of normality and purpose as well as keeping them up to date for when they are back at school.

Find opportunities for them to interact with their friends remotely. For tweens and teens, contact with their peers is especially important. Technology provides lots of opportunities for older children to connect, chat and game together. But be wary of giving unsupervised access to platforms that you would not normally allow your child onto; the internet still poses the same risks as in normal times.

Balance screen time with other activities. Challenge children to learn new skills that don't involve screens e.g. tying shoelaces, juggling, baking. Older children might want to set their own goals.

Give children opportunities to have a say in what will be happening. They may have had a lot of their freedoms and choices removed for a while and may feel powerless or angry. Older children and teenagers will be more able to understand the risks in too much screen time, too little sleep, inactivity etc. They are more likely to 'buy in' to new rules and routines if they feel that they have a voice. Family meetings where children and adults problem-solve together can be helpful for this.

Avoid being too immersed in media coverage. Be mindful of the amount of things you are reading and watching, including social media – as this may add to worry and anxiety. Consider a few updates every day from trusted sources.

There are some example timetables on the next page. These are just shared as a guide but may be helpful in terms of thinking about how to maintain some structure and routine throughout days at home. Remember to intersperse activities with breaks, and don't forget healthy snacks and drinks!

Example Timetables

Get ready for the day	• Have breakfast, have a wash, get dressed
9am Activity 1	• Online learning from school OR a craft activity (cutting and sticking, painting, baking)
10am Activity 2	• Online learning from school OR some writing or maths - write a story, count coins
11am Get active!	• Play in the garden, do an exercise video
12 Lunchtime	
1pm Help about the house	• Help tidy up, Hoover, wash up
2pm Quiet time	• Do something calm, like reading or colouring
3pm Activity 3	• Online learning from school OR be creative – make some music, design an outfit
4pm Have some free time	• Enjoy toys and tech
5pm Dinner time	• Help prepare dinner – help tidy up too!
6pm Family time	• Play a game, watch a movie, spend time together
Get ready for bed	• Have a bath, get pyjamas on, read a story

45 mins Academic learning

45 mins Creative Activities

45 mins Exercise

Have lunch

Downtime

45 mins Academic learning

45 mins Help around the house

Free time

Have dinner

Contact family and friends - phone, Facetime, email

Free time

Get ready for bed

Talking to children about Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Although it's tempting to try and protect children from difficult topics, they are more likely to worry when they're kept in the dark. Children and teenagers will be aware of what is happening but may not have all the facts they need to understand it.

These tips will help you talk about Coronavirus with your child:

- Take time to talk and listen. Be clear that you are happy to answer any questions that they have. Be led by your child as they may not be that interested or want to know everything all at once. Try to answer any questions honestly but keep things in context e.g. "Sadly, some people do die, but the vast majority of people will recover, and children seem to be only mildly affected".
- Reassure them that their own risk is very low but that we all need to 'do our bit' to look after people who might be very unwell. Underline how helpful they are being by following the rules about hygiene and social-distancing. Knowing we're being altruistic helps us to bear the tough times.
- Give positive messages about everything you are doing as a family to keep yourselves safe. Talk about all the work people around the world are doing to find treatments and a vaccine.
- Be patient; children and young people can find it hard to talk about their worries and may not want to say that they are frightened. Watch for clues that they may want to talk, such as hovering around while you do jobs. Younger children may ask a few questions, go off and play, then ask more questions.
- Keep explanations developmentally appropriate.
 - **Young children** up to about age seven will need very simple explanations that relate to their own experiences. Explain that, like other germs, Coronavirus can spread between people and make them ill. But because Coronavirus is a new germ that we don't know everything about, we need to take more care and so things might be a bit different for a while.
 - **Older children will** want to know more. They may have heard partial explanations and 'filled in the gaps' themselves with their own ideas, so check what they already think they know about it.
 - **Teenagers** will have a similar capacity to understand what's going on as adults. They will need calm, factual information and opportunities to talk through their worries and disappointments.
 - **For all**, provide honest, accurate, and factual information about the current status of the virus. Having such knowledge can help them feel a sense of control. It's important for your children to know that people are helping each other with acts of kindness and generosity. Think about how they can help – maybe skyping someone who might be lonely.
- Give your children an opportunity to talk about their feelings. Our instinct might be to 'make it all better', but it is normal to feel scared, sad and angry in the face of what's happening. Tell them that what is happening is not normal but that their feelings are.

Sources of support

General mental health and well-being

General – for parents / carers

Samaritans

Call 116 123

<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/>

Mind UK

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/support-community-elefriends/>

UK Mental Health Charity with information and an online mutual support community

General – for young people

Kooth is an online counselling and emotional well-being platform accessible through mobile, tablet and desktop and free at the point of use for older children and young people in Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole and across Dorset. It is supported by the NHS and BCP Council.

www.kooth.com

Other useful sites for mental health and well-being include:

www.youngminds.org.uk

www.keep-your-head.com

Parenting pressures

Family Action

Telephone: 0808 802 6666

Text message: 07537 404 282

<https://www.family-action.org.uk/what-we-do/children-families/familyline/>

The FamilyLine service supports people who are dealing with family pressures in a new and innovative way by using a network of volunteers from across the country to support family members over the age of 18 through telephone calls, email, web chat and text message.

Family Lives (previously Parentline)

Call: 0808 800 2222

<https://www.familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help/confidential-helpline/>

Family Lives offers a confidential, free helpline service for families in England and Wales (previously known as Parentline) for emotional support, information, advice and guidance on any aspect of parenting and family life. The helpline service is open 9am – 9pm, Monday to Friday and 10am – 3pm Saturday and Sunday.

Gingerbread

Single Parent Helpline: 0808 802 0925

gingerbread.org.uk

One Parent Families/Gingerbread is the leading national charity working to help lone parents and their children.

Grandparents Plus

Call: 0300 123 7015

grandparentsplus.org.uk

Grandparents Plus is the only national charity (England and Wales) dedicated to supporting kinship carers - grandparents and other relatives raising children who aren't able to live with their parents

Helpful resources for talking to children about Coronavirus

Covibook

<https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>

A short book about Coronavirus for children under 7

Newsround video

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51342366?fbclid=IwAR3CyZq5rzXVoyGCgWjjpx6YqoetuZ1tP16y7wMjUR6uwgWyhRmf0aFTrAs>

Young Minds:

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus/>

Child Mind Institute

<https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>

<https://www.actionforhappiness.org/news/covid-19-how-to-respond>

Resources for talking to children and young people with additional needs:

Social story for younger children

<https://theautismeducator.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-Corona-Virus-Free-Printable-Updated-2-The-Autism-Educator-.pdf>

Social stories/stories with visuals for Primary age children

A Carol Gray social story about corona virus at

<https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Pandemics-and-the-Coronavirus.pdf?fbclid=IwAR23zxNlbEumpw4oKIM7Xy3VIKnA25b8Gi53N6YiFleKB9Vx0LQypSPYzzg>

Also <https://www.ppmid.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-Corona-Virus-Free-Printable-Updated-2-The-Autism-Educator-.pdf>

Social story for older children

<https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Pandemics-and-the-Coronavirus.pdf>

“Easy Read” information for young people and adults with learning difficulties

<https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/coronavirus> -

Resources for educating children and young people at home

Many schools will be setting their own learning. However, if you need something else to keep your children usefully occupied then this non-exhaustive list might help those affected by school closures due to coronavirus, compiled by home educators:

There are a number of online sites where you can download free books for children, for example the BookTrust has online books for children from birth to 14

BookTrust

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading/our-recommendations/100-best-books/>

BBC bitesize. This offers a range of learning and programs for primary and secondary children in a wide range of subjects.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>

BBC Learning

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/coursesearch/>

This site is old and no longer updated and yet there's so much still available, from language learning to BBC Bitesize for revision. No TV license required except for content on BBC iPlayer.

ELSA Resource

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/coronavirus-14-day-self-isolation-activities/>

Khan Academy

<https://www.khanacademy.org>

Especially good for maths and computing for all ages but other subjects at Secondary level. Note this uses the U.S. grade system but it's mostly common material.

Futurelearn

<https://www.futurelearn.com>

Free to access 100s of courses, only pay to upgrade if you need a certificate in your name (own account from age 14+ but younger learners can use a parent account).

Seneca

<https://www.senecalearning.com>

For those revising at GCSE or A level. Lots of free revision content. (Paid access to higher level material).

Openlearn

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/>

Free taster courses aimed at those considering Open University but everyone can access it. Adult level, but some e.g. nature and environment courses could well be of interest to young people.

Blockly

<https://blockly.games>

Learn computer programming skills - fun and free.

Scratch

<https://scratch.mit.edu/explore/projects/games/>

Creative computer programming

Ted Ed

<https://ed.ted.com>

All sorts of engaging educational videos

National Geographic Kids

<https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/>

Activities and quizzes for younger kids.

Zero to Three: <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3264-at-home-activity-guide>

Duolingo

<https://www.duolingo.com>

Learn languages for free. Web or app.

Mystery Science

<https://mysteryscience.com>

Free science lessons

The Kids Should See This - Wide range of cool educational videos

<https://thekidshouldseethis.com>

Crash Course

<https://thecrashcourse.com>

You Tube videos on many subjects

Crash Course Kids

<https://m.youtube.com/user/crashcoursekids> (As above for a younger audience)

Crest Awards

<https://www.crestawards.org>

Science awards you can complete from home.

iDEA Awards

<https://idea.org.uk>

Digital enterprise award scheme you can complete online.

Paw Print Badges

<https://www.pawprintbadges.co.uk>

Free challenge packs and other downloads. Many activities can be completed indoors. Badges cost but are optional.

Tinkercad

<https://www.tinkercad.com>

All kinds of making.

Prodigy Maths

<https://www.prodigygame.com>

Is in U.S. grades, but good for UK Primary age.

Cbeebies Radio

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/radio>

Listening activities for the younger ones.

Nature Detectives

<https://naturedetectives.woodlandtrust.org.uk/naturedetectives/>

A lot of these can be done in a garden, or if you can get to a remote forest location!

Oxford Owl for Home

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/>

Lots of free resources for Primary age

Big History Project

<https://www.bighistoryproject.com/home>

Aimed at Secondary age. Multi disciplinary activities.

Geography Games

<https://world-geography-games.com/world.html>

Geography gaming!

Blue Peter Badges

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/joinin/about-blue-peter-badges>

If you have a stamp and a nearby post box.

The Artful Parent

<https://www.facebook.com/artfulparent/>

Good, free art activities

Red Ted Art

<https://www.redtedart.com>

Easy arts and crafts for little ones

The Imagination Tree

<https://theimaginationtree.com>

Creative art and craft activities for the very youngest.

Toy Theater <https://toytheater.com/>

Educational online games

DK Find Out

<https://www.dkfindout.com/uk/?fbclid=IwAR2wJdpSJSelTf4do6aPhff8A3tAktmpaxqZbkgudD49I71ep8-sjXmrac>

Activities and quizzes

Twinkl

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk>

This is more for printouts, and usually at a fee, but they are offering a month of free access to parents in the event of school closures.

Virtual tours

<https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours>

Virtual tours of some of the world's best museums

Reference documents:

The World Health Organisation

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/coping-with-stress.pdf?sfvrsn=9845bc3a_2
https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/helping-children-cope-with-stress-print.pdf?sfvrsn=f3a063ff_2

Mental Health UK

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

NEF – Five Ways to Wellbeing: The Evidence

<https://neweconomics.org/2008/10/five-ways-to-wellbeing-the-evidence>

Wang et al (2020) Mitigate the effects of home confinement on children during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Lancet; Correspondence.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30547-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30547-X)

National Association of School Psychologists

[https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource)

Brooks et al (2020) The Psychological Effects of Quarantine and How to Reduce It: A rapid review of the evidence. In The Lancet Volume 395, ISSUE 10227.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30460-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30460-8)

The Child Mind Institute

<https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>

Mind Hong Kong

<https://www.mind.org.hk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ResponseCoronavirusENG6.2.2020-.pdf>

Library Service Resources

<https://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/Libraries/LibraryServices/cyberlibraryresources/eBooks.aspx>

This information was compiled from sources including the Wiltshire Council's Guide 'Looking after yourself, looking after your children' 2020