

COVID-19: Supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of students returning to school – A brief guide for parents and carers of secondary school children

Due to the most recent lockdown, primary and secondary schools in England have only been open for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers. All other children have been learning remotely. With support from the Local Authority, schools have planned how all pupils will return to education in March in a measured way that prioritises the safety of everyone.

Some children and young people will be happy to go back to school. However, others may feel worried or uncertain. Parents and carers might also have mixed emotions about the proposed return to school; these feelings are understandable and normal in the current circumstances.

This document will help you prepare your child/children and yourself for their return to school. All the links and resources this document contains can be found on www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk.

How can I help to prepare my child for returning to school?

What can you do?

- Have a discussion with your child about school and what it might be like.
- Think about what the routine will be that your child needs to follow before they return, a bit like when you return to school after the school holidays.
- Some (but not all) children may be worried about leaving their families. If this is the case, reassure them that you will be safe while they're at school and that school know how to contact parents/carers, just like before.
- Discuss any changes to travel arrangements to and from school.
- Discuss any changes to extra-curriculum, or after-school activities if they are being provided.
- Explain that the school staff will understand that it might take time to settle back in.
- Reassure your child that things are different for other students and the staff too.
- If you or your child has any particular needs, worries or concerns, share them with their tutor.
- Your school should send you and your child information about what to expect and any changes. If you haven't heard from your school yet, check their website for any updates or contact them in the usual way.
- All schools will have risk assessments, policies and procedures and will let you know how they will work to keep you child physically and emotionally safe while they are in school.

- If your child would have travelled via public transport or car shared with another family pre-COVID, contact the travel provider/family to understand and agree how this will work under social distancing guidelines. You may need to arrange alternative travel plans.
- Find out who you and your child can get information, advice and support from at school to support emotional health and wellbeing e.g. form tutor, head of year, pastoral lead, SENCO etc.

Where can you find out more?

- Emotional health and wellbeing information and advice to support you and your child can be found on the **Open Minds in Calderdale** website www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk.
- Information **Open Minds** (CAMHS): can be found here www.calderdaleccg.nhs.uk/cyp-ehwd-c19.
- **Time Out Listening Line for children and young people** offers the opportunity to get some simple advice and guidance about how to keep busy and reduce anxiety. The website offers a platform to have your say and get involved in the Time Out project. Age range: 10-19 years. Contact details: 07418311736. www.healthymindscalderdale.co.uk/time-out.html
- **Healthy Futures Calderdale, Chathealth** is a messaging service for students aged 11-19 (07480 635297), and parents and carers of students aged 5-19 (07507 332157). Nurses pick up messages between 9am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday and will reply within one working day. When a text has been received an immediate bounce-back message is sent to let the person know a message has been received. To advertise Chathealth to parents please use this [short video](#).
- **Healthy Futures Calderdale** have produced this video [Going back to school during COVID-19: advice for parents](#).
- **Kooth** is an online mental wellbeing community for children and young people aged 10-25. Open until 10pm every evening, 365 days a year. www.kooth.com
- **C&K Careers Chat** offers support, advice and guidance for children and young people in Calderdale and Kirklees aged 13-24 years. Open Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm. Thur, 9am-8pm. <https://ckcareersonline.org.uk/news/333-chat>

My child is worried about catching the virus at school

What can you do?

- Evidence suggests that children and young people are less likely to be poorly with COVID-19.
- Reassure your child that staff in school are working hard to make things safe for when they return. Any changes put in place for how students and staff access and move around the building, take part in lessons and other school activities will be explained.
- Your child can help to keep themselves and others safe. Remind them about the 2 metre rule, to wash their hands with soap and water regularly for 20 seconds and if they cough to cover their mouth with their arm and if they sneeze use a tissue and put it straight in the bin. Remind them to use hand sanitizer and not to touch their face and if they feel unwell, they should tell a staff member.
- Your school can give advice about bringing tissues and hand sanitizer to school.
- Your child's school will take steps to limit the amount of contact between students, such as smaller class sizes. They will also increase cleaning within school and encourage children to maintain good hygiene.
- Explain that when they go to school, they'll get plenty of help to remind them what to do.

Where can you find out more?

- Emotional health and wellbeing support on coronavirus can be found on **Open Minds in Calderdale** website www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk/category/help-and-support-coronavirus.
- **Healthy Futures Calderdale Chathealth** is a messaging service for students aged 11-19 (07480 635297), and parents and carers of students aged 5-19 (07507 332157). Nurses pick up messages between 9am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday and will reply within one working day. When a text has been received an immediate bounce-back message is sent to let the person know a message has been received. To advertise Chathealth to parents please use this [short video](#).
- Information for parents from Gov.uk [What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#) (updated 24 February 2021).
- Resource Pack For Parents <https://covid19.nhsgrampian.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-Resource-pack-For-Parents.pdf>.
- Young Minds [Talking to your child about coronavirus](#) and [what to do if you're anxious about coronavirus](#).
- The Government has provided advice to schools on the steps they should take to support children of key workers and others who are returning to school. This can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers (updated 24 February 2021).
- A resource pack by NHS Grampian for teenagers to help manage difficult feelings about coronavirus <https://covid19.nhsgrampian.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-Resource-pack-overs-its-ok-to-worry-about-coronavirus.pdf>.

My child seems upset/worried about returning to school

What can you do?

- Be positive, talk and listen to your child. Don't dismiss any worries even if they seem unrealistic.
- Remind them that it's OK and normal to feel worried, and that others will be worried too.
- Some children (but not all) may be worried about leaving their families. If this is the case, reassure them that you will be safe while they're at school, that school know how to contact parent/carers – just like before.
- Discuss travel arrangements to and from school.
- Explain who your child can get support from while they're at school e.g. form tutor, head of year, pastoral lead, SENCO etc.
- Encourage your child to get plenty of sleep and limit screen time before bed. Put normal school-time routines back in place.
- If you or your child has any particular needs, worries, or concerns that you want to share with their tutor, let your school know.
- Make sure you are OK and seek support or advice if you need it.

Where can you find out more?

- Your child's school should send information about what to expect and any changes.
- Emotional health and wellbeing support for your child transitioning back to school can be found on the **Open Minds in Calderdale** website www.openmindscalderdale.org.uk/school-transition-support-2/.
- It's important that parent/carers and children know that feeling of stress, worry or uncertainty are understandable under the current circumstances and that worry is a normal emotion. [This leaflet](#) provides parents/carers with some top tips, useful resources, and links to local support services.
- These [Worry Cards](#) have been created to help decrease stress levels surrounding any worries or queries that children and young people might have.
- **Anna Freud Centre parent/carers section** www.annafreud.org/coronavirus-support/support-for-parents-and-carers.
- Emotional health and wellbeing support for adults in Calderdale can be found at www.calderdaleccq.nhs.uk/looking-after-your-emotional-health-and-wellbeing.