

Reaching out to children and young people with hidden vulnerabilities at the start of the autumn term

This paper, the fifth in our series of guidance on supporting children and young people from primary to further education with hidden vulnerabilities, focuses on support available in the new academic year.

Our research to date suggests that those children and young people who suffered the most from isolation during Covid-19 were those who have vulnerabilities which their schools and colleges are aware of but who were not regarded as “vulnerable and needing to continue their education in school or college during the isolation period”. These children and young people will probably have been at home, trying to learn through online learning which the school or college provided, and may have had to wait for help with IT equipment when it was available. They may have suffered anxieties during this time and may have been contacted by support services from their schools, colleges, or local authorities.

When these children and young people with hidden vulnerabilities return to school and college, they have a lot to worry about.

Papers in the ASCL ‘Reaching Out’ series

- [Reaching out to children and young people with hidden vulnerabilities](#)
- [Reaching out to children and young people with hidden vulnerabilities | phase 2](#)
- [Reaching out to children and young people with hidden vulnerabilities: preparing for a return to school and college](#)
- [Reaching out to children and young people with hidden vulnerabilities as schools and colleges open to a wider number](#)

This paper builds on our fourth publication, [Reaching out to children and young people with hidden vulnerabilities as schools and colleges open to a wider number](#), which provided guidance in June 2020 on planning for September and the general guidance provided by ASCL about what to do to prepare your school or college for a ‘whole institution’ return.

It provides a roadmap to help children and young people cope with being back in school or college and provides some advice to teachers about what to do to help and support them. If they have results from GCSEs, A levels, vocational qualifications or other examinations which did not provide the outcomes they need to progress onto the next stage of their education or training, this paper also makes suggestions about how to help them cope with any subsequent disappointment or worry..

Principles

The principles for supporting children and young people with hidden vulnerabilities are many and varied but we set out below some general principles to guide professionals at this difficult time.

1. Prioritise the most vulnerable first.
2. Do what is right for the children and young people concerned
3. Provide support within the models which already exist within your organisation.
4. Clarify who you are targeting and why.
5. Make the support count for each child and young person.
6. Respond to needs as they arise.
7. Make support 'feel' bespoke.

Results days and follow up actions

Results days are always pressurised for Year 11 and 13 students and this year even more so. With their results based on centre assessment grades and ranking, without the opportunity to 'taste' the possible options for progress and transition, greater challenges are likely to be in store. [Research](#) suggests that this is a time when young people often experience mental health issues and feelings of self-worth are challenged, particularly with the additional and ongoing situation surrounding the government U-turn on exam results.

Those who work with these young people will know they need to listen to their concerns and help them understand that they need to keep an open mind about their future, that failure is sometimes normal and it doesn't mean they need to drop out altogether.

Listening to and acknowledging concerns

Children and young people may respond to stress in different ways. Signs may be emotional (for example, they may be upset, distressed, anxious, angry or agitated), behavioural (for example, they may become more clingy or more withdrawn), or physical (for example, they may experience stomach aches).

Look out for any changes in their behaviour. Children and young people may feel less anxious if they are able to express and communicate their feelings in a safe and supportive environment. Children and young people who communicate differently to their peers may rely on you to interpret their feelings.

Creating a new routine

Life is changing for all of us. Routine gives children and young people an increased feeling of safety in the context of uncertainty, so think about how to develop a new routine.

Catch-up funding

The government provided catch-up funding for children and young people via a fund linked to tutoring. Initially, this was only for children up to the age of 16, however it was later announced that £96 million funding was also intended for 16-19-year-olds. This funding works out at about £80 per head but it might help some children and young people get the help they need to catch up, if catch up is what they need.

Government guidance to support mental health and wellbeing

Resources are available [here](#).

Examples of support delivered in FE colleges

The Association of Colleges (AoC) has produced these [case studies](#).

Northern Ireland

For colleagues in Northern Ireland, the Minister for Education published a [road map](#) on 27 July 2020 to assist leaders prepare for the full return to school and college.

Useful websites:

The NHS has provided guidance on mental health and wellbeing [Every Mind Matters](#)

[MindEd](#) is a free learning resource about the mental health of children, young people and older adults.

From the Children's Commissioner, [Children's Guide to Coronavirus](#).

[Shout](#) helpline for young people.

[The Mix](#), for young people coping with uncertainty over exam results.

[Rise Above](#) provides ways to help children and young people cope during lockdown periods.

Wellbeing for young people

ASDAN provides [activities](#) for supporting health and wellbeing as children and young people settle back to school.

Additional digital resources

The DfE has also requested materials produced by Great Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership are shared ahead of the return to school and college. SEND messages have been embedded throughout the materials. The video films and clips offer direct reassurance from young people about how returning and are well worth sharing.

Packs

Three resource packs (primary, secondary and further education) have been collated in response to concerns raised by young people and families. Resources are grouped into types, for example teaching materials, and resources for parents, and are a mixture of information leaflets, short films, advice and guidance.

- [Primary school](#)
- [Secondary school](#)
- [Further education](#)

Films

Four short films (primary, secondary, SEND and further education) reassuring children and young people and their families and carers about precautions being taken and showing them how the 'new normal' looks.

- [Primary school](#)
- [Secondary school](#)
- [Further education](#)
- [SEND](#)

Clips

A series of short video clips (similar to the information films and all less than one minute in length) have been selected for schools and colleges to embed into communications.

- [Secondary school: clip 1](#) : pupils talking about how they feel safe in secondary school.
- [Secondary school: clip 2](#) : pupils talking about managing anxieties and support available
- [SEND: clip 1](#) : pupils talking about how their school staff help them
- [SEND: clip 2](#) : pupils talking about how it is ok to be worried and help available
- [Primary school: clip 1](#): pupils talking positively about what it will be like in their Primary school in September
- [Primary school: clip 2](#): pupils talking positively about how it is normal to feel anxious about returning to Primary school
- [College: clip 1](#): staff and students talking about how safety measures have been put in place in college
- [College: clip 2](#): staff and students talking about support available for anyone who is anxious about returning to college.

Wordless stories for primary children

This free resource developed by [Barry Carpenter](#) can be used to support and scaffold discussions with primary pupils about the impact of returning to school after lockdown. Schools might like to share it with parents and teachers and can be downloaded [here](#).

Lenny and Lily in Lockdown and *Lenny and Lily Return to School* will help children make sense of their experiences during the coronavirus pandemic, communicate their feelings, and prepare for more change as they go back to the classroom. As the stories are told in pictures alone, it is not necessary for children to be able to read words to enjoy them and are appropriate for pupils in both mainstream and special education settings.

Both stories are structured around the 5 Losses and 5 Levers of the [Recovery Curriculum](#).

Supporting text at the end of each story gives teaching staff and parents guidance on how to use the stories with children.

Additional support for adopted and care-experienced young people during the autumn term

- 1) [Guidance for teachers supporting adopted children and young people](#) (nasen)
- 2) [Guidance for school leaders supporting adopted children and young people](#) (nasen)
- 3) [A return to school passport for care experienced children and young people](#) (Adoption UK)
- 4) IMO ('in my opinion') [podcast series](#)

Pupils in temporary accommodation

[No Way Out](#) - supporting young people who don't have permanent accommodation. This report from the Children's Commissioner asks schools to pay particular attention to supporting young people in temporary accommodation. Check regularly on attendance and behaviour being ready to offer additional support early.

Pupils with special educational needs

School leaders and SENCOs may wish to refer to nasen's [Whole School SEND resources](#), Covid 19 Review or [Condition specific videos](#) to support staff training.

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