Returning Safe, Happy and Settled

A guide for schools and settings in response to the Covid pandemic

Durham County Council

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Preface

This document has been prepared in order to support school/settings in their planning for a safe, happy and settled return to school or setting. It is one of a number of documents developed within Durham County Council, with a particular focus on inclusion, health, and well-being. It offers an overview of evidenced approaches that will be helpful, and in the appendices, there is a rich array of information including sources of advice, help, direct support and staff development across the range of presenting issues and needs you will have within your school/setting community. For ease of use each section of the appendices has hyperlinks that will take you to more detailed information focusing on specific areas when you need it. The information in the hyperlinks will be updated over time as we move through the phases of recovery.

Introduction

Research suggests that many children and young people can find the transition between school/setting unsettling and stressful. Following the current Public Health Crisis (Covid-19) it is likely that many children and young people will experience similar feelings when they return to school/setting once social isolation ends. This is likely to be apparent for a wide range of children, including those who are vulnerable, have special educational needs, or are moving to a new school/setting. This guidance has been prepared to support schools/settings in planning for their pupils to be happy, safe and settled on their return.

At the time of first writing, there had been an announcement that schools and education settings would be opening their doors to welcome more children on a phased return. It has now been confirmed that all schools will be reopening to all pupils from 1st September. Schools, education settings and support services have been working differently over recent months and services may need to be rebuilt carefully in partnership with families. Given this, the approaches and key principles presented in this document can be used flexibly by school/setting as appropriate to their context and as the process of return becomes clearer.

Why is it important to plan for return to school/setting during the Covid Pandemic?

It is important that we support our children and young people to experience a successful and 'soft landing' back to school/setting following the period of lockdown, recognising that this will be a process and not a single event. How this feels for a child can have a powerful and long-lasting effect on academic outcomes, as well as impacting on their self-esteem and emotional wellbeing.

During a period of transition children and young people can experience:

- A sense of loss of attachment to familiar people, friends, the environment and objects within that environment
- Role and identity uncertainty
- Anxiety within an environment that is initially less predictable
- A perceived loss of control
- An experience of being de-skilled and less capable
- Uncertainty about the future.

The impact of the Covid Pandemic will have heightened these features as well as additional thoughts and worries about safety and health issues. Ongoing planning to make sure that the culture and curriculum offer promotes a safe and happy return to school/setting is essential. Barry Carpenter, Professor of Mental Health in Education describes how recent events may have led to the loss of routine, structure, friendship, opportunity and freedom for children and young people. He suggests that these factors should be prioritised by education settings in developing their 'Recovery Curriculum'.

Essential to a positive return to school/setting are:

- Advance planning and preparation
- Clear processes for communication
- Attention to relationships
- Solution focused conversations.

Promoting well-being after a difficult period or event: A Recovery Approach

It is important to recognise that for some children, going back to school/setting will be a welcome return. However, for many children this will be a time of anxiety. It is important to remember that each child will have had their own experience. It will take time for children to re-establish and re-learn routines and expectations in school/settings. It will be important to respond to what children have learnt, not what we expect them to have learnt, and what they may have forgotten. It could well be over-whelming and frightening to be amongst groups of children and adults, especially given the concentrated time spent in the home environment because of 'lock down'.

We know that transition is a process and not an event. Research from The Sutton Trust (April 2020) reported that only 45% of students had communicated with the teachers at that time. Further research from Oxford University (The Guardian, April 2020) stated that a fifth of primary aged school children were afraid to leave the house, where older children were more concerned with their health and that of their families, reporting that two fifths of young people were worried that their friends or family will catch the virus and one fifth worried about catching it themselves. It is likely that some children in your schools and settings may have similar anxieties or experiences.

In Durham the views of over 4,000 children, young people and their families indicated that their experiences have been varied, with some children and their families facing challenges, loss and bereavement, whilst others reported the situation has been enjoyable. The concerns raised by our children and families relate to worries about being safe, missing schoolwork and their friends, and moving on to new classes and new school/settings. These issues will require consideration as school/settings and families plan for a return.

Teachers and other adults who listen with empathy perform an important therapeutic function, without being therapists. Some children may be carrying a large emotional burden and school/setting might be their only place to talk about this. The 'SWAN' framework and the 'Recovery Curriculum' draw from trauma informed approaches and nurture practice and suggests a number of key principles can be applied when thinking about how to support all pupils and staff upon their return to school/setting. Schools/settings may want to consider how their behaviour and relationship polices reflect these principles.

The Culture and Environment

The SWAN Framework offers a simple overview of the cultural approaches that are going to be helpful for a happy, safe and settled return to school/setting. At a very basic level all children and young people need to feel:

1. Safe

- Emotional and physical safety
- With clear rules and procedures
- Involve children and families in establishing the rules to ensure understanding and make sure everyone is clear about expectations of all parties involved. Involve children in making playground rules and rules for unstructured times such as break and lunch
- Communicate with families before school/settings open to reassure that it will be safe – what would parents/carers like to see?
- What would success look like? What will you do if unsuccessful?

2. Welcome

- Consider how we follow the rules while also creating a warm environment
- Show children we are happy they are back; we are excited to see them – instead of reflecting worry etc.
- Create a sense of belonging and 'togetherness'
- Also make families feel welcome and work on strengthening relationships with them
- There will be a need to create new rules for social interaction – have we lost some of our skills in human connection? We need to think about how we rebuild connections
- Work together as a whole school/setting – how will we create a warm and comforting environment for children and staff when they return?

3. All together

- All agencies need to come together to support children – no one agency is going to be able support the child and is a good time to break down barriers and come together as a team to provide a framework of nurture and support
- Work with children and parents/carers to ensure their voice is heard
- Consider how we support vulnerable children – use these approaches to inspire a universal approach for all children

4. Nurtured

- There will be a temptation to make up for lost time, jump back into curriculum
- Play the long game – build up fragile children, families and staff – create an environment where they can thrive in the long term

- Anxiety, worry, high alert means that they are not ready for learning yet as thinking is focused more on safety than learning – this is a typical expected response and will be reinforced by the rules we put in place and the constant reminders of the rules – but we must put these rules in place
- Remember this is a big transition and we may have forgotten how to be around other people, how to be at school/setting, how to learn etc. – we may need to relearn our skills
- Create readiness for learning through nurture and play
- What has worked well in the past to create nurturing playful environments?

A Curriculum for Recovery

Carpenter's 'Recovery Curriculum' is built on 5 Levers, with a systematic, relationships-based approach underpinning the child or young person's readiness to learn.

Lever 1:

Relationships – the world at return will feel different and relationships will have changed, there will need to be investment in rebuilding and restoring these. This will take active planning.

Reach out to greet them, use the relationships we build to ease any challenges on returning.

Lever 2:

Community – it is important to recognise that curriculum will have been based in the community for a long period of time and experiences will have been varied. It is important to listen to what has happened in this time, understand the needs of our community and engage them in the transitioning of learning back into school/setting.

Lever 3:

Transparent Curriculum - all of our students will feel like they have lost time in learning and we must show them how we are addressing these gaps, consulting and co-constructing with our students to support them and any feelings of loss.

Lever 4:

Metacognition - in different environments, students will have been learning in different ways. It is vital that we make the skills for learning in a school/setting environment explicit to our students to reskill and rebuild their confidence as learners.

Lever 5:

Space - to be, to rediscover self, and their voice on learning. We must work together to make sure this group of learners is not disadvantaged against their peers, providing opportunity and exploration whilst managing our expectations.

For more information about SWAN and the Recovery Curriculum see:

- https://www.evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum/
- https://elearning.creativeeducation.co.uk/courses/support-a-safe-successful-return-to-school-using-the-swan-framework/

Key Elements of a Successful Return to School/Setting

Planning and Preparation

- Identify information to be shared with pupils and families – what class they are going to, which staff they will be with, which pupils they will be with, what the routines will be etc.
- Plan activities/projects that can support the process of return. Ensure these are accessible to all pupils.
- Work with parents/carers to enable them to support their child(ren) and prepare them for a successful return to school/setting.
- Identify the pupils who will need a more enhanced and individualised plan.

Clear Communication

- Ensure regular and positive communication with parents /carers.
- Be interested in your pupils' stories and engage with them in an age-appropriate manner
- Engage regularly with all staff to make them aware of plans and any changes from the 'normal' ways of working.
- Engage with feeder / receiving school/settings and ensure processes in place for the transfer for all necessary information for those children who may be entering a new setting.

Consideration of Relationships

- Plan time for pupils and staff to develop relationships and to get to know each other.
- Identify pupils who need additional supports.
- Consider the social relationships available to individual pupils i.e. are they with established and known friends.

Solution focused conversations*

Be curious with staff, parents/carers and young people. Ask:

- How are we getting this right?
- What resources could we share or do we need?
- What can we do tomorrow?
- What can we work on together?

(* taken from Creative Education: SWAN Framework).

Identification of Children and Young People with Additional Vulnerabilities

In addition to considering the processes in place to support all children and young people returning to school/setting, there are some specific groups that may require additional planning including those:

1. transitioning to a new school/setting
2. with additional vulnerabilities including:
    a) identified SEND (with or without an EHCP)
    b) in need, looked after, supported through special guardianship, adopted
    c) in the 'shielded and protected' group
    d) previous poor attendance
    e) previous or recent trauma or loss
    f) living with mental health and well-being vulnerabilities
    g) living with physical health vulnerabilities
    h) young carers
    i) previous risk of exclusion
    j) with protected characteristics
    k) risk of exploitation or radicalisation
    l) those who have offended
    m) affected by domestic abuse

The information below is intended to be a guide to some of strategies that may support your thinking for groups where specific plans for transition are required.

1.Transition to a New School/Setting (Also see Appendix 1 for more details of resources and support)

Normal transition activities that support pupils' anxieties and expectations when moving to a new educational setting will not be possible in the current climate during the summer term. Early years settings and schools/colleges/universities are currently all exploring new ways in which to achieve this so that pupils and their families feel supported and reassured.

There is much awareness of the significant gap in academic learning and potential mental health issues that may have developed prior to an autumn start, and this is also being considered when planning transition activities in preparation for the new academic year.

In Appendix 1 contains suggestions to support transition at all key stages and a list of useful resources and contacts.

2. Additional Vulnerabilities

There are specific groups of pupils to think about when planning the return to school/setting. These include pupils who are likely to have the found the changes in routines or disruption to relationships extremely challenging, such as those;

a) with identified SEND (with or without an EHCP)
b) in need, looked after, supported through special guardianship, adopted
c) in the 'shielded and protected' group
d) with previous poor attendance
e) with previous or recent trauma or loss
f) living with mental health and well-being vulnerabilities
g) living with physical health vulnerabilities
h) who are young carers
i) at previous risk of exclusion
j) with protected characteristics
k) at risk of exploitation or radicalisation
l) who have offended
m) affected by domestic abuse

These groups of students may need to have specific plans in place that take into account the support and teaching approaches which have proved effective in the past. For some schools/settings and children additional guidance and support might be required. (see Waves of Support and detailed information in the Appendices).

Children who have (or continue to experience) disruptions in their home life and events which have affected their well-being, such as those in the care system or who have Child in Need and Child Protection plans, will likely require an enhanced level of planned emotional support and nurture through caring relationships to enable a successful return to school/setting. Consideration should be given to developing plans jointly with services known to the young person/family and ensuring regular and effective planning with families to enable a holistic and family centred approach to working.

3. Identification of Vulnerable Individuals

Identifying and supporting vulnerable children will be important, and school/settings should recognise that these cannot be assumed to be only those children with previously identified needs, but also some children who are considered to typically manage well. This is likely to be emerging from the conversations that school/settings are already having with families.

The emotional needs of some children may become more apparent once they are back in the school/setting. It is therefore important that staff continue to monitor pupils, showing sensitivity to signs that they need to be supported in a different or enhanced way. It is likely that over time, and following the return to school/setting, it will be necessary to make adjustments to the level of emotional and social support in place as required.

Some children and young people may have had prolonged exposure to unstable, unsafe or violent situations within the home during the period of lockdown. Designated Safeguarding Leads will want to consider how the school/setting has sufficient capacity for a possible increased number of disclosures.

It is also important that consideration is given to children/young people who may not be returning into their school/setting at this time. It is possible that on-going shielding and social distancing measures, may prevent some pupils returning. There are also young people who are currently placed at alternative provisions. Settings should plan how to remain connected to those pupils and consider their emotional and relationships needs.

Supporting Parents/Carers

The return to school/setting will also be a time of significant change for many parents and carers. For most, they have been at home with their children for an extended period, and the parents/carers themselves may have worries about the return to the school/setting.

They may have concerns about:

- their son or daughter settling into a new class, or for some, a new school/setting;
- any enduring emotional impact of recent events, including experiences of loss and bereavement;
- any lasting impact of the disruption to their son or daughter's learning and progress;
- their son or daughter being able to re-establish friendships and relationships in the class or school/setting;
- their son or daughter's safety, particularly if they have any existing health concerns.

It is important that school/settings and professionals appreciate the thoughts and worries of parents and carers and pro-actively seek to reduce anxieties which may transfer to the individual child. We should reassure parents/carers that any feelings of worry are understandable and normal in the current circumstances.

For All Parents and Carers

- Ensure that there is effective and enhanced communication in place in the lead up to and the weeks following any return to school/setting. This should include contact from the pupil's new class teacher (if this has changed) and key workers (if relevant). This will enable the sharing of information on both sides, and offer parents/carers an opportunity to share information that may impact on the pupil's return to school/setting (for example, have they experienced bereavement and loss as a result of Covid 19, have there been any changes within the family, are parents/carers key workers etc.?).
- Make parents/carers aware of all plans that are being implemented for transitions and the enhanced arrangements on offer. Explain what is different about the process of transition this year.
- Any social distancing and safety measures that are in place within the school/setting, make sure that parents/carers know how these are being implemented and are aware of any changes and modifications.
- Parents/carers may appreciate information being shared with them about changes that they can prepare their son or daughter for: new staff, classroom, routines, additions to the behaviour policy to ensure safe practice and any other changes that have occurred in school/setting.

- Offer a key point of contact for questions and concerns. Parents/carers may have more queries than would typically be expected at a transition point.
- Once children return to school/setting, parents/carers may continue to need an enhanced level of contact, and the space and opportunity to talk to staff about the settling in process more frequently than might typically be planned.
- Share information with parents/carers about the emotional support and provisions that will be in place for all children in the weeks (and months) ahead.
- Make parents/carers aware of how school/setting will assess and support learning over the coming months.

See Appendices for adaptable template booklets for use with children, young people and their families.

Parents/Carers of Children Entering Reception / Year 1

For the parents/carers of children formally entering school/setting for the first time, the current situation may result in increased worries and the possibility of separation anxiety occurring. This may be particularly challenging for young children who have had limited contact with anyone outside their immediate family during the Covid-19 period.

(for more detailed information on planning and helpful resources see appendix 1a)

Parents/Carers of Pupils Moving to a Different School or Setting

This is a big point in the life of a child and their family. Take time to consider how to say 'goodbye' to parents/carers, as well as the pupils, even if this is done retrospectively. Let parents/carers know what information has been shared with the new school/setting, so that they feel assured that information has been effectively shared.

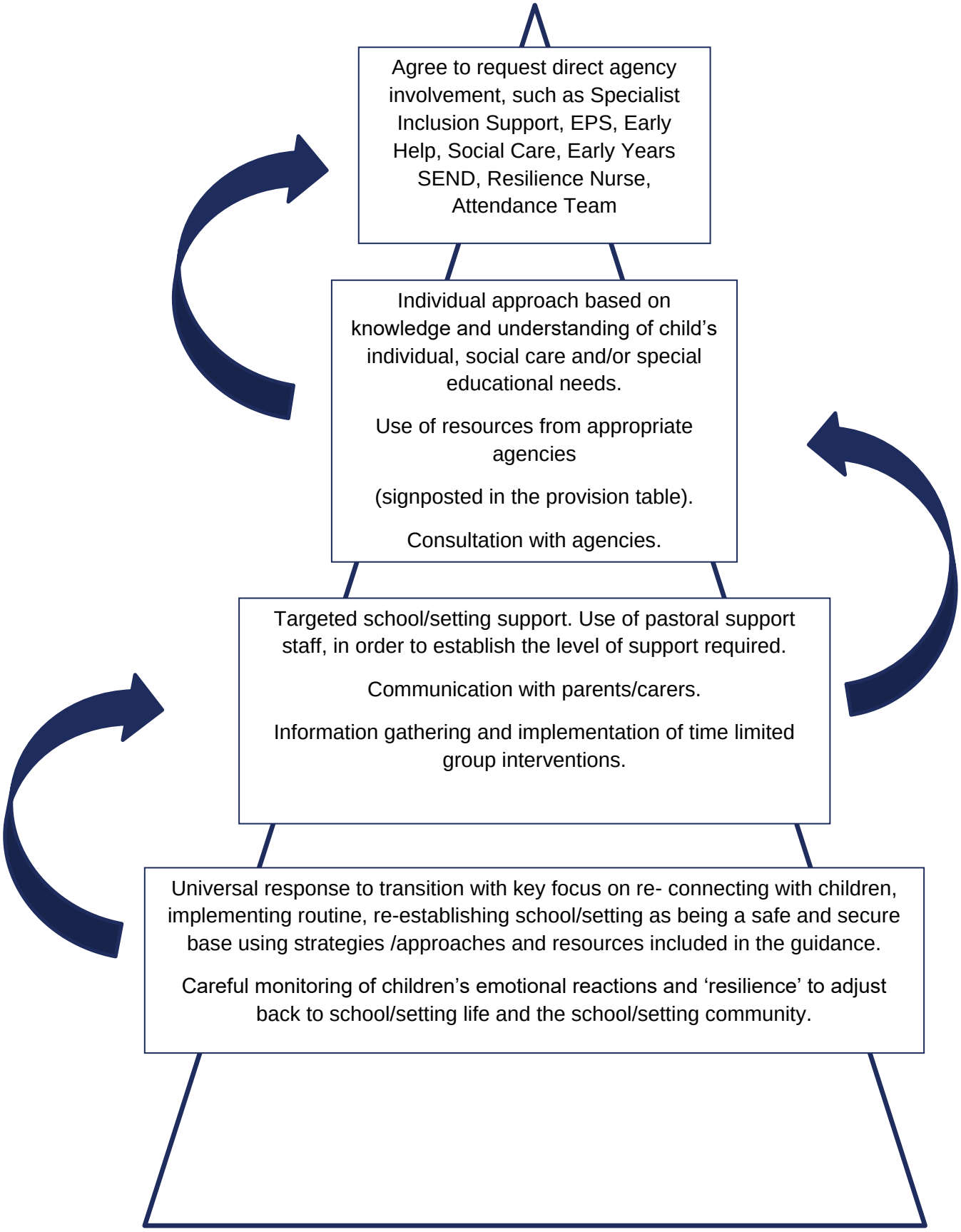
(for more detailed information on planning and helpful resources see appendix 1)

Guidance for Schools and Settings

The following guidance is provided as a means of supporting settings to aid the transition of all children and young people back to school/setting based on the principles outlined above.

The following guidance includes a diagram illustrating a graduated approach including universal approaches for all pupils, working towards targeted and individualised planning, where necessary. Also included is a table highlighting relevant support at each stage. Additionally, further considerations and practical advice can be found in the appendices.

Waves of Response



Appendices

Appendix 1a:

Early Years Guidance for Schools - Effective Practice in Covid Times

A Curriculum of Care - Considerations for Early Years Practice in COVID-19 Times has been updated and adapted to support staff in County Durham schools in light of a full return to education.

Opportunities for bespoke school CPD to accompany the guidance can be provided by the Education Durham Advisory team through SLA contract hours. Please speak to your school SLA account manager for further information.

Transitions to a new school or setting

Normal transition activities that support pupils' anxieties and expectations when moving to a new educational setting were not possible during the summer term. Early years settings and schools/colleges/universities are currently all developed new ways in which to achieve this so that pupils and their families feel supported and reassured, and support for these pupils needs to continue in the coming months.

Supporting Effective End of Key Stage Transition to a New School or into Post 16 Education Employment of Training

Appendix 1b:

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

The World Health Organization describe mental health as:

'… a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.'

We all face threats to our mental health in our day to day lives. These can range from interactions and events that present us with a manageable challenge, through to situations that from time to time may feel overwhelming. It would be difficult to live our lives threat free, and for the most part people are resilient and able to adapt and cope with what they are faced with.

While many of us will cope and adjust to life in lockdown and the gradual return to normal life, for some the experience will result in the return of old traumas and the experiencing of new ones which compromise our mental health. It is important that we understand rather than judge how an individual responds, and recognise the many ways in which we can help them regain their resilience and start to recover and heal.

The signs that a young person is struggling with their mental health can vary but might include anger, challenging and provocative behaviour, out of control or 'bizarre' behaviours, friendship problems, a need to be near adults, or the display of repetitive behaviours. Signs might also take the form of a strong tendency to avoid, to under respond to events, or to freeze when faced with everyday challenges. Problems may be observed at home and school, or only at home or school.

For some young people, going back to school will be a welcome return, for others this will be a time of considerable stress. Each young person will have had their own experience and it will take time for them to re-establish and re-learn routines and expectations in schools. We know from national and local surveys that for some young people, and the adults around them, there are worries about health, and about the impact on families and friends. Some children will have experienced loss, and some may have had experiences that were traumatic in other ways.

Fortunately, much is known about what can help a young person to recover and heal where they have been adversely affected, and applying a trauma informed care framework to how we approach the reopening of schools can help us meet the diverse mental health needs of our young people over time. Central to this is the idea of relationships. Teachers and other adults who are

confident in listening with empathy perform an important therapeutic function, without being therapists. Behaviour as communication is a second key principle, and our ability to understand the needs reflected in the behaviour we observe will also be vital in ensuring we help the recovery of these young people. Environments and practices can promote healing and recovery, but also inadvertently re-traumatise. As we adapt to implement the necessary social measures, we will have to consider the impact of this on more vulnerable young people. Crucially, we must ensure that young people feel safe enough to re-engage positively.

We have collated the following to help you in meeting the mental health needs of your young people as they return to school, and in the days and weeks that follow:

Guidance and an overview of the support available.

Resources that you may find helpful when working with young people, parents or colleagues within your school setting.

Staff training and development opportunities that are free to Durham schools this term.

Click here to access sources of advice, help and information relating to the mental health and wellbeing of your school community.

Click here for mental health and emotional support for children, young people and families in County Durham.

Click here for mental health and emotional support for adults in County Durham.

Appendix 1c:

Physical Health and Wellbeing

There is strong evidence that regular physical activity is associated with numerous health benefits for children and young people. Benefits of physical activity include strong bones and muscles. healthy heart, lungs and arteries. improved coordination, balance, posture and flexibility. reduced risk of becoming overweight or obese. Being more physically active is inherently good for a child and young person's health, now and in the future!

Covid-19 lockdown measures may have reduced physical activity levels for all or some children and young people. The restrictions of indoor space, access to outside open areas and or lack of 'play' associated social interaction with friends will all have contributed to reduced time 'moving', possibly impacting upon physical movement capabilities and physical development. In some cases, activities that have taken place may not have been appropriate, sufficiently enough, focused enough or engaging to provide a broader movement need for all and some children/young people.

Physical Education lessons at the re-opening of school/settings will need to be planned and structured in order to minimise risk of infection associated with coronavirus and ensure activities are low risk to avoid injury that may place strain upon the NHS. Consideration to particular physical movement including core strength, fundamental movement, agility, balance and coordination activities should be included in sessions to support children's physical development, recognising that high intensity training is not suitable for all children and young people. Adaptations to lessons and activities will need to review social distance measures, hygiene and alternative equipment use. County Covid-19: Physical Education, School Sport and Physical Activity delivery in schools. Guidance document is available (see hyperlink in appendix).

Physical activity not only supports the physical health of a child, it promotes social and psychological wellness as well as cognitive function. Evidence also suggests it can boost cognitive function and engagement in academic learning. School/setting routine post lockdown should reflect the need for children and young people to 'wiggle more' and 'move more' in order to be ready to learn. Active blast opportunities, active curriculum learning, whole school/setting movement initiatives, already introduced in some of our school/settings as part of their pledge and commitment to be an Active 30 school/setting should be part of the embedded wellbeing programme for all pupils and staff. Reducing periods of sedentary behaviour will support children, physically, mentally and socially and there are a variety of useful tips, tools and support available. For further considerations, advice and guidance **Click here**

Appendix 1d:

Promoting Positive Behaviour

During the pandemic, many children/ young people will have experienced loss or trauma, some will be grieving for family members, all children will have had a different routine (or no routine) and may struggle with the return to school/setting. They will need additional support and understanding based on rebuilding strong relationships, restorative and healing approaches, and the flexibility to make adjustments to meet need. They will need time to understand the changes to school/setting practices and expectations and the opportunity to explore big and complex questions which may be worrying them and to unpick and begin to make sense of the changes they have experienced. A recent report from the Excluded Lives Research Team, Dept of Education, Oxford University draws on discussions with a wide range of stakeholders, including schools and local authorities, to highlight potential school exclusion risks and to suggest ways forward after Covid-19. **Click here** for further information.

It will be important to remember that, while children are often resilient and many will bounce back, all children could now be vulnerable in ways we haven't considered before. This may manifest as hyper-vigilance, restlessness, fight or flight reactions, lack of concentration, challenge to adults or refusal / inability to follow new rules and routines.

School/settings will have the difficult job of balancing these individual child needs with the imperative to introduce new behaviour routines to keep children safe and prevent the spread of infection. Implementing and interpreting a school's behaviour policy flexibly would be a major way of demonstrating that wellbeing is school/setting's first priority.

For further considerations, advice and guidance **click here**

Appendix 1e:

Promoting Positive Attendance

The Government have made clear that a full return to school for all pupils in September 2020 is a national priority.

As we welcome children back into our local establishments, we want the 'new' normal for them to be a safe, calm and settled environment and represent a nurturing space they want to attend. Whilst transformation can be a tremendous force for good, the transition back to school/setting is unlikely to be a linear process and may manifest as a difficulty for some children young people and families.

The impact of children being away from the usual school/setting routine for a long period will represent real challenges for school/settings as they prepare to support children who may express any anxiety or distress they are feeling by being easily overwhelmed, having difficulty re-establishing relationships with peers and teachers, in poor self-regulation or by negative thinking. Some children may have developed attachment difficulties which is likely to exacerbate any historical irregular or poor attendance.

The school/setting's recovery plan will be crucial to rebooting the energy and resolve of parents/carers and children to establishing a 'new' normal and in enabling child and family readiness for a return. Collaborative approaches to working with families combined with new ways to reach out to them will be crucial to the success of the purposeful action required to build the confidence of families to support the full return.

For further considerations, advice and guidance **click here**

Appendix 1f:

Safeguarding

Vulnerable children and young people across all year groups are expected to attend educational provision where it is appropriate for them to do so. This should remain a priority, including when some year groups begin to return to on-site provision.

School/settings should consider how best to respond to potential increased safeguarding concerns. Colleagues need to be mindful that children and young people may make disclosures of a safeguarding nature, particularly in relation to domestic abuse, drug and alcohol related issues and child exploitation, including on-line exploitation, and Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) should follow normal safeguarding procedures.

School/settings should, where possible, have a trained DSL or deputy available on site. Where this is not possible school/settings should either arrange for a trained DSL or deputy from the school/setting to be available to be contacted or share DSLs or deputies with other school/settings.

KCSIE is statutory safeguarding guidance that school/settings should continue to have regard to. - **Keeping Children Safe in Education**

For Early Help Requests, school/settings can use the online form or telephone the Early Help Triage Workers to discuss any worries directly on **03000 267 979 - Option 4**. Early Help Advisors are also on hand to support school/settings – for details and contacts, please **click here**

Safeguarding Referrals should be made via the normal route to First Contact. Information on how to make both Early Help and Safeguarding referrals can be found at the following link. **https://www.durham-scp.org.uk/professionals/** . **If school/settings are worried about a risk of significant harm to a child it is essential that you share your concerns by contacting First Contact on 03000 267 979 - Option 3**

If school/settings are unsure about whether or not to make a referral, please refer to the Durham Threshold Document which can be found via the **Durham DSCP website** . A procedure has been agreed between the Local Authority and the Police in relation

to requests made by school/settings to carry out welfare checks on those vulnerable pupils, school/settings are having difficulty contacting. For further information please **click here**

Children and Young People Affected by Domestic Abuse

The government definition of domestic abuse states:

"Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but not limited to, the following types of abuse

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person dependent by isolating them from sources of support and exploiting their resources for personal gain e.g. depriving someone of access to money making them feel it impossible to leave the relationship

Coercive behaviour is a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten the victim

As children and young people return to their education setting, we must acknowledge that for some, home has not been the safe space they needed, evidenced by the continued Operation Encompass notifications and police incidents over the lockdown period.

The stay at home order put in place to save lives and protect the NHS will have caused significant anxiety for families who are experiencing or feel at risk of domestic abuse, including children and young people, as incidents of domestic abuse often increase when households and/or relationships are under additional pressure.

Settings must consider how best to respond to the potential of increased safeguarding disclosures and concerns. Where disclosures are made you must follow normal safeguarding procedures and refer to the information set out in **Appendix 1f above.**

What can you do?

If someone is in immediate danger always ring 999

Offer covert, trauma informed support to children and young people who have been subject to an Operation Encompass alert in school.

In order to effectively supporting a child, young person or family where domestic abuse is a feature please refer to section 5 in the **County Durham Children and Families Practice Toolkit.** This recently updated guide provides a range of quality assured resources and tools that will help support families affected by domestic abuse.

If you feel that a family requires input from specialist services please make a referral to Harbour Support Services, our countywide service who offer support to adult victims, children and young people, and perpetrators of abuse.

Anyone can refer, this includes self-referrals or referrals from other professionals. The telephone number **03000 202 525** is active 24/7 and you can send requests through email **clientservice@myharbour.org.uk.** Harbour is operating innovative ways to support people during COVID 19 including an expansion of virtual support.

Please note that Harbour are unable to directly support children under 10 years virtually, however they are working with others to support professionals, including teachers and support staff so that they can effectively support these children until face to face contact with this group can resume.

Appendix 1g:

Shielded and Protected

Please **click here** to access the Shielded and Protected Guidance for Schools and Settings.

Appendix 1h:

Information for children with SEND during the Covid-19 pandemic

Schools/settings will be considering the careful planning and support required to ensure a safe return for those young people with SEND.

They will need to recognise the individual needs of each of their vulnerable learners to ensure a successful reintegration into the school communities with their peers. This ought to be produced, monitored and reviewed with child/family input. In support of this approach we have previously provided guidance on risk assessments **click here.** Schools/settings will need to ensure risk assessments are brought up to date with a review that supports a young person's return phase to school/setting.

If you require additional help in considering what can be done to overcome barriers to a successful return we will continue to provide an offer of support as detailed here: **Support and services for schools and settings**

Statutory Processes

The Secretary of State for Education has issued a notice to modify section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014. This modifies duties to make provision using reasonable endeavours. Guidance has been set out by the **Department for Education (DfE)**, health and care needs assessments and plans covering these temporary changes during the coronavirus (COVID-19) arrangements. We have planned to ensure minimal impact on our service provision over the return phase. The key areas of consideration are:

New Assessments - Following a request for assessment the Local Authority is still working to the guidance and timescales as set out in the SEND Toolkit which can be found on the **Local Offer – for professionals and providers page**

Annual Review - The requirements to conduct annual reviews remain in place. In this instance we will continue to operate a business as usual approach to our reviewing of EHCPs. Details on conducting annual reviews can be found in the **'How to hold a statutory annual review guide'**, page 39 of the SEND Toolkit located on the Local Offer:

Top up funding requests – All existing TuF payments will continue as per existing arrangements.

- Existing Top up funding requests will be processed, if the request is a matter of continuing previous TuF provision these requests will continue with a start date aligned to the review period.

- New requests will be quality and value assured with new funding agreements will usually commence when schools return following the COVID arrangements

Appendix 2:

Supporting Parents and Carers

Click here to access a document with information and sources of support for parents and carers

Appendix 3:

Editable Templates for School/settings to Share with Children and Families

An editable social script for children preparing them for the return to school/setting (Version A)

An editable social script for children preparing them for the return to school/setting (Alternative version B)

Appendix 4:

Additional reading and resources

The compassionate and connected classroom: A health and wellbeing curricular resource for upper primary

Supporting children and young people with SEND as schools and colleges prepare for full opening

Professor Barry Carpenter has produced 2 books (free to download) Lenny and Lily in Lockdown and Lenny and Lily Return to School to 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. This means they are appropriate for pupils in both primary mainstream and special education settings.

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

www.booksbeyondwords.co.uk/lenny-and-lily-childrens-stories

Please **click here** for the recent letter from Vicky Ford MP Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families regarding welcoming children and young people back into school

Contributors

With thanks to the contributions from:

Representatives from Durham primary, secondary and special schools

Rollercoaster Group

DCC Specialist SEND and Inclusion Teams/Educational Psychology

DCC Education

DCC Early Help

DCC Public Health

Designated Clinical Officer

HDFT 0-19 Service

Children, young people and families in County Durham*

Wakefield Educational Psychology Service

(*Survey responses from 305 parents/carers, and 3,972 children and young people)