Recovery, Re-introduction and Renewal: Safe and Successful Returns to School

A Handbook for Schools and Education Settings following Critical Incidents

Supplemented by online resources https://www.aep.org.uk/recovery-re-introduction-renewal/

'It is possible to prepare for the future without knowing what it will be.

The primary way to prepare for the unknown is to attend to the quality of our relationships, to how well we know and trust one another.'

Margaret Wheatley, 2004

WholeSchool SEND

nasen
Helping Everyone Achieve

Nottinghamshire County Council

aep

Foreword

Many children and young people experience circumstances that disrupt school attendance or placements. Ensuring that every child returning to school, or joining a new school, following a major event or change has always been important, especially for children and young people identified with SEND.

The COVID-19 episode has exacerbated the need for high-quality and evidence-informed information to support education professionals to successfully re-engage pupils with learning after a period of disruption or trauma. This information is grounded in psychological research and theory and seeks to outline essential information in a clear and accessible manner that will be relevant to colleagues in different roles, including those in leadership or classroom-based and across different phases, including primary and secondary.

To ensure longevity of the work, the focus of this handbook is on securing a successful return to school and learning after a critical incident which can occur at child, family, community, or national level, including:

- Bereavements of key people, in their families, communities and schools
- Loss of routines and traditional rites of passage
- Relationship breakdowns such as parent or carer divorce
- Establishment of new learning routines and relationships in a social distancing context

Whole School SEND is delighted to have worked with the Association of Educational Psychologists and Nottinghamshire Educational Psychology Service to produce this handbook.

Adam Boddison
Chair, Whole School SEND; CEO, nasen

Anne Heavey
National Director, Whole School SEND

Contents

1.0 Introduction and How to use this Handbook **2**

1.1 What do we know about critical incidents and recovery? 2

1.2 What does this handbook hope to achieve? 2

1.3 How to use this handbook 3

2.0 The 5 Key Principles of Recovery **5**

2.1 Psychology of the 5 Key Principles of Recovery 6

3.0 A Graduated Response to Recovery **8**

3.1 Universal Support 8

3.2 Targeted Support 10

3.3 Individual Support 11

Information Pack 1: Listening and Talking to Children and Young People **12**

Guiding Principles – It's good to talk and listen. 12

Using Stories to Explore Feelings 13

How to Use Active Listening 13

Further Resources 13

Information Pack 2: Adult Wellbeing – Staff and Parents/Carers **14**

Returning to school: The psychology of staff wellbeing 14

School Planning Tool for Staff Wellbeing 16

Individual Adult Wellbeing Reflection Tool 18

Returning to school: Advice for school staff supporting parents and carers 19

Further Sources of Support for Adult Wellbeing 20

Information Pack 3: Loss, Bereavement and Change **21**

Guiding Principles 21

Talking to Children and Young People about Loss, Bereavement and Change 21

Helping People Express Grief 22

A knowledge base of loss and bereavement 22

When might a child/young person need more support? 23

Who to contact? 23

Information Pack 4: Targeted Groups and Individuals (e.g. children and young people in vulnerable situations) **24**

Supporting Transition Back into Education Setting/School: Individual Support Plan 25

Information Pack 5: Curriculum Support **26**

Appendix 1: Graduated Response School Checklist/Reflection Tool **28**

References **30**

1.0 Introduction and How to use this Handbook

1.1 What do we know about critical incidents and recovery?

In a school context, a **critical incident** is:

'any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school community' (*National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS), 2016*)

Existing research evidence and practice tell us that school communities and individuals can and do recover from such events by drawing on their existing strengths and resources. This universal recovery process of resilience or 'learning to surf the waves' of adversity can be seen at individual and organisational levels (Kabat-Zinn, 2012; Masten A. , 2018).

Key predictors of successful recovery or protective factors include:

1 Connection / Relationships.
2 Flexible Coping Skills.
3 Sense of agency/control e.g. being actively involved in your own recovery process. (Herman, 2015)

These factors are reflected in early research exploring young people's views on what support they wanted in the return to school phase following the coronavirus pandemic i.e. safety, relationships, certainty and opportunities (Sivers, 2020), in particular the importance of relationships. Following a critical incident, schools can support these key predictors of successful recovery by re-establishing familiar **relationships and routines** and by maintaining **robust systems of monitoring** and identifying those who may need more intensive, individual support over time.

(Treisman, 2017)

This handbook has been written in the context of the unprecedented coronavirus pandemic, however, it includes universal principles of recovery and guidance on returning to school that can be applied to other critical incidents and experiences of loss and change. This handbook is based on **5 Key Principles of Recovery**, which can be applied at a whole school and individual level to promote healthy recovery during the 'return to school' phase after a critical incident. The application of universal, whole-school guiding principles is particularly important following a whole-community experience, where the particular impact on individual members of the community may be unclear. There is also strength in children and adults experiencing shared recovery within the context of relationships and in focusing on emotional wellbeing and safety first, to re-establish engagement with learning and development (Maslow, 1987; Masten A. , 2018; Herman, 2015)

1.2 What does this handbook hope to achieve?

- To promote **relationships as an intervention**; they are the primary mechanism for supporting our recovery from adversity. We recover from adversity within the contexts of our relationships.

> **"Strengthened social relationships are a key resource in times of acute stress.**
>
> **Indeed, the perceived absence of supportive relationships is one of the strongest predictors of post-traumatic stress disorder."**
>
> ***(Brewin, 2000)***

- To outline some of the **interventions that all children may value** in supporting their emotional recovery back into schools and re-engagement with learning.
- To recognise that while there are some children who may have experienced more vulnerable situations, it is necessary to **be vigilant towards *all* children's emotional need**s (the critical incident may have affected the children you would least expect it to).
- To **recognise the need to talk** about shared experiences and emotional responses as a way of making sense of them and moving on from them.
- To **join up** the work of the different services and to **support schools to process the resources** available to them.

1.3 How to use this handbook

This document presents the **5 Key Principles of Recovery** based on psychological models of resilience (British Psychological Society; Masten A. , 2001; 2018), growth and recovery (Herman, 2015; Joseph, 2012), and positive psychology (Seligman M., 2014), as well as the evidence base linking social emotional learning and attainment (Durlak et al, 2011). A **Graduated Response to Recovery** is presented to demonstrate how these 5 principles can be applied in practice, with a focus on universal support and a whole-school approach.

The **Graduated Response to Recovery** identifies 3 levels of support:

1. **Universal** support for ALL children, young people, staff and parents returning to schools after a critical incident.
2. **Targeted** support for children, young people, staff and parents in specific contexts or with specific needs, e.g. Year 6-7 transition, group support for children and young people with SEND.
3. **Individual** support for children, young people, staff and parents in contexts, or with specific needs, where they require an individual response to meeting their needs e.g. children and young people with SEND.

At each level, **general principles and practical strategies** are presented to illustrate how the 5 Key Principles of Recovery can be applied, with links to further information, if needed. **Further online resources** can also be found at https://www.aep.org.uk/recovery-re-introduction-renewal/. A strengths-based audit tool is also included for school leaders to use in implementing this Graduated Response to Recovery (See **Appendix 1**).

The handbook also includes **5 stand-alone information packs** which can be shared with staff and parents/carers considering the following topics:

1. Talking to Children and Young People.
2. Supporting Adult Wellbeing (Staff and Parents/Carers).
3. Loss, Bereavement and Change.
4. Targeted Groups (children and young people in vulnerable situations).
5. Curriculum Support.

2.0 The 5 Key Principles of Recovery

This model presents the 5 Key Principles of Recovery following a critical incident which can be applied at an individual and whole-school community level. While this model presents 5 distinct principles for the purpose of clarity, in reality these ideas overlap.

This model draws on the recent work of Biborough Educational Psychology Consultation Service (2020), Meredith (2020) and Wakefield Educational Psychology Service (EPS) (2020).

Remember: Every child is an individual

- *Not all* children will be feeling concerned about the critical incident, or about returning to school, and for some children attempts to help them 'recover' from a traumatic event may not be relevant or appropriate for them. For some children, the return to school and **re-connection with relationships and routines**, will be key protective factors facilitating resilience.
- *Some* children may expect to return to school as they knew it, but school may be very different from what they remember initially, and this may unsettle them. These children will need careful preparation, including the use of **visual, as well as verbal, means of communication**.
- *All* children will need some preparation for a return to school, e.g. a letter from the head or their class teacher welcoming them back and highlighting things that may have changed – as well as things that are familiar. Children who have been in school (i.e. keyworker children during the coronavirus pandemic) could also help by adding pictures/comments.

> **"You get by in a crisis by holding onto and being guided by core values – compassion, solutions, generosity' kindness and collaborations, amongst others."**
>
> ***(Mark Goodwin, Equal Parts Education)***

2.1 Psychology of the 5 Key Principles of Recovery

Key protective factors for children's mental health and resilience can exist within the school community without specialist intervention/knowledge e.g. relationships children have with their school community and a school ethos which prioritises emotional health and wellbeing (Public Health England, 2016). These are the foundations of the 5 Key Principles of Recovery, which Masten (2001) refers to as 'ordinary magic.'

> **"Resilience is made of ordinary rather than extraordinary processes."**
>
> ***(Masten, 2001)***

The 5 Key Principles are based on the psychological models of resilience (British Psychological Society, 2020; Masten, 2001; 2018) **post-traumatic growth and recovery** (Herman, 2015; Joseph, 2012) and **positive psychology** (Seligman, 2014), as well as the evidence base linking **social emotional learning and attainment** (Durlak et al, 2011). From these models, we can draw out **3 strong predictors of successful recovery** in the face of adversity or 'protective factors':

1 Connectedness/Relationships.
2 Flexible Coping.
3 Sense of Agency/Control e.g. being actively involved in your own recovery process.

(*Herman, 2015*)

These factors are embedded within the 5 Key Principles of Recovery and the Graduated Response framework suggests strategies and approaches schools can use to promote these protective factors following a critical incident. The approaches involve strengths-based practices to empower adults and children/young people to actively construct their own recovery, with evidence-based support and guidance.

Some individual adults and children/young people may have had a particularly traumatic response to the critical incident. Models of post-traumatic growth (Joseph, 2012) and recovery (Herman, 2015) offer positive models of recovery in the face of trauma through processes of 'harnessing hope' (Joseph, 2012) and re-connecting with relationships (Herman, 2015).

For these individuals/groups, the universal application of the **5 Key Principles of Recovery** can support the initial stages of recovery, particularly establishing a sense of safety (see below) with close monitoring enabling identification of individuals who may need more specialist, individual support. A trauma-informed approach to recovery adopting the model of post-traumatic growth involves the following stages:

1 Being safe and protected from harm.
2 Coping well: developing effective coping strategies.
3 Processing and making sense of our experiences e.g. talking and using stories.
4 Living the life you choose: being able to move forward in life, beyond trauma.

(*NHS Education for Scotland, 2017*)

3.0 A Graduated Response to Recovery

The Graduated Response lists examples of good support at 3 different levels. Links to key online resources are provided and further resources can be found at https://www.aep.org.uk/recovery-re-introduction-renewal/.

- **Universal** support for ALL children, young people, staff and parents/carers returning to schools after a critical incident. For whole community experiences (such as the coronavirus pandemic), it is most important to focus on this level of support as we may not know who will be impacted most and social emotional learning interventions have consistently been shown to be more effective when embedded into routine educational practices (Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), 2018).
- **Targeted** support for children, young people, staff and parents in specific contexts or with specific needs, e.g. Y6-7 transition, group support for children and young people with SEND.
- **Individual** support for children, young people, staff and parents in complex contexts, or with complex needs, where they require an individual response to meeting their needs.

See Appendix 1 for a Graduated Response School Checklist/Reflection Tool.

3.1 Universal Support

For ALL children, young people, staff and parents/carers.

General Principles/Approaches

- Explicitly state the school's **focus on wellbeing** (including staff wellbeing) which will lay the foundation for successful re-engagement with learning.
- Acknowledge the importance of **parent/carer wellbeing**.
- Include staff, parents/carers and children in **decision-making and planning**, where possible and appropriate.
- **Embed social emotional learning** within the curriculum e.g. Social Emotional Learning in Primary Schools EEF, Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA), RSE and Health Education., Academic Resilience Framework etc.
- Use data to **monitor all children's wellbeing and re-engagement** with learning to identify those needing additional support.
- If children have been absent from school for some time, **carefully plan the curriculum** for them (See Information Pack 5 for more information).
  - **Informal teacher assessment** over time is likely to be most useful for determining gaps in learning skills and content. Formal assessment to determine gaps in learning is likely to be less effective as children will be out of routine and practice.

- Re-teach **Metacognition Strategies** i.e. learning how to learn, study skills. These skills are widely applicable to all subjects. Draw on the student's knowledge of how they have learned (curriculum and non-curriculum) while away from school. The aim is for children to be skilled and independent learners.
- Create **lessons** which support autonomy, a sense of competence and relatedness by drawing on children and young people's individual interests and areas of strength. This will help them to develop the motivation to re-engage with learning.

- Ensure **clear and regular communication** between school and parents to create a feeling of connectedness.
- **Make time for talking** – in general, as well as about the critical incident, to allow children's voices to be heard and to value their contribution. Little and often is a good approach when it comes to relationship-building – 5 minutes daily will have a bigger impact than half an hour a week. Consider setting ground rules for group and individual conversations to keep everyone safe.
- Remember the principles of **active listening** (i.e. respect, genuineness, being non-judgemental, fully focused on the other person, 'open' body language, not rushing to solutions or advice-giving).
- Remember that children may have a **positive key relationship** with a member of staff in school who is not necessarily in a therapeutic role for them, (e.g. midday supervisor/receptionist/ governor volunteer). The child would benefit from time with this staff member. If so, remember also that the staff member may need support around this.

Specific Strategies/Activities for Emotional Wellbeing and Relationships

All Age Ranges: (Primary and Secondary)

- Follow an Emotion Coaching model to support children if they are experiencing distress.
- Check-ins and check-outs e.g. (Restorative Circles, Circle Time).
- Engage in creative art activities to support expression e.g. drawing, painting.
- Have a class Gratitude Jar (class writes on a post-it, put in a jar and teacher reads aloud).
- Take part in Random Acts of Kindness – generosity can be a boost to a child's wellbeing and positive sense of self.
- Mindfulness activities e.g. Take 5 at School and The Big Book of Calmers.
- Metacognition Strategies.
- Tree of Life narrative approaches.
- The Circle of Courage – a children and young people voice gathering tool.
- Resources from the Mentally Healthy Schools Toolkit.
- Wellbeing Journals to help children to reflect on their wellbeing e.g. Understanding Me, A Mental Wealth Journal for Key Stage 2-3.

Early Years/Primary

- Read and discuss therapeutic stories – The Little Elf Who Missed His Birthday Party & The Little Elf and the Flowers of Hope and Bravery.
- Use picture books to help children cope with issues and worries e.g. www.littleparachutes.com
- Have 'Ask It' Baskets/Worry Boxes in the classroom to enable children to ask questions they may have/share feelings they have but do not want to say in front of others. This will also allow staff time to prepare a response to relieve any pressure they might be feeling.
- Make a Happiness Box for children to use.

Secondary

- Consider secondary-school focused resilience and wellbeing curriculum resources: The Resilient Classroom Programme, The Wellbeing Toolkit for Teens.
- Direct young people to high quality online resources and information about mental health and wellbeing e.g. Young Minds.

Staff

- Build in opportunities during the day/week for staff to check in with each other.
- Provide a space where staff can go if they are needing a break or feeling overwhelmed – and someone to talk to, if they wish.

- Maintain and/or develop (new) **normal routines** as much as possible.
- Ensure **effective communication with parents/carers** during the preparation to return as this will support planning. Consider a short survey/questionnaire for parents to find out how things have been at home e.g. what has their child's day looked like, what has gone well, what has been challenging, what are they worried about?
- **Prepare children and parents/carers in advance** for changes at school and what these will look like – a letter, story, video or pictures will help.
- Consider creating **physical safe-spaces** with children in school e.g. decorating the pastoral centre or sensory room.
- Remember children of all ages will need **re-teaching of the routines and rules of school**: verbally and visually. The word discipline means 'to teach'. Repeat information and explanation; many children will be anxious at the outset of a return to school and so find it hard to process information. **Be patient, consistent and kind** as you and your children re-learn about being at school.

- Complete a **strengths-based audit** of what the school is doing well. *See Appendix 1 for a Graduated Response School Checklist/Reflection Tool*.
- Plan **assemblies (where/when appropriate) and visual displays** to reaffirm school's core values e.g. Who are we? What is important to us?

- Acknowledge loss, change and bereavement e.g. hold some form of remembrance event with the children.
- See **Information Pack 3: Loss, Bereavement and Change**.

3.2 Targeted Support

For children, young people, staff and parents/carers in specific contexts or with specific needs.
(in addition to Universal Support)

See Information Pack 4: Targeted Groups (children and young people in vulnerable situations) leaflet for more information.

General Principles/Approaches

- Plan for **additional learning support and intervention** for children/groups of children and young people who struggle to re-engage with learning due to missed learning or ongoing emotional needs. Consider targeted SEND reviews for specific areas of need.
- **Key adults being available** to support children and young people if, and when, needed.
- **Key members of staff** such as SENCo and Designated Safeguarding Lead having **additional time** to attend to any matters that require their input. This may involve re-prioritising/delegating tasks.
- **Preparation** before returning to school, e.g. visuals, social stories, comic strip conversations.
- **Small group work**, specifically targeting area of need, such as specific work around emotions, emotional regulation, bereavement, loss and change, for example: e.g. ELSA or Lego-based Therapy.
- Consider how you will **keep connected** to staff/children and young people who will not be returning to school yet (e.g. for health reasons).

Consider Potential Targeted Groups e.g.

- Those immediately impacted by the critical incident e.g. children of keyworkers in coronavirus pandemic, children and young people who have been bereaved, children and young people within minority communities.
- Children in Care/Previously in Care.
- Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
- Children and young people at key points of transition, including those starting school for the first time.
- Children and young people with Social Workers.
- Young Carers.
- Children and young people living in poverty.

3.3 Individual Support

For children, young people, staff and parents in complex contexts or with complex needs where they require an individual response to meeting their needs *(in addition to Universal and Targeted Support)*.

- Create an **Individual Support Plan** for the return to school (*See **Information Pack 4** for example*).
- Provide a **consistent adult** that the child can develop a positive and trusting relationship with.
- Offer specific **targeted work** with a familiar adult trained in delivering the programme (e.g. Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA), school counsellor).
- Consider using a **personalised timetable in the short term** to help with returning back to school.
- Remember that some children may experience **separation anxiety** from parents/carers – individual support may be needed to offer reassurance (e.g. meet and greet, transitional objects).
- Remember that some children and young people may have experienced **loss and bereavement** and may need some additional adult support in time, such as an ELSA or other suitably trained adult.
- Some children and young people may require a **risk assessment and behaviour regulation plan**, to ensure consistency and to build a confident approach when dealing with any risky behaviours.

Information Pack 1: Listening and Talking to Children and Young People

Guiding Principles – It's good to talk and listen

Children and young people in the school community have experienced change and some will have been more affected than others. Adults may be able to predict the response of children in some groups, but keep in mind that we do not know what a child's experience is until we ask and listen to them.

- **Relationships** are key to recovery from a challenging situation/big change. Re-connect and actively build supportive relationships with the children and young people in your care. Help children re-connect with friends and form new friendships.
- **Create opportunities to talk** to your child/young person using active listening techniques. Be curious, in groups and individually. Encourage children and young people to talk with each other and provide structure and guidance for such discussions.
- **Encourage questions** and reflection and remember that you do not have to have all the answers.
- **Show empathy and understanding**. Accept the child/young person's description of their experience and thoughts, without judgement. Avoid giving advice until invited. Sometimes, children and young people just need to be heard and listening is the solution.
- **Acknowledge that school may be different now**, particularly if familiar routines and class groups are different, and it may change again. Discuss how change is part of life.
- **Apply the Goldilocks Principle** i.e. tell the child what they want to know, not too much and not too little. Use language the child can understand.
- **Help your child to be active** in constructing their recovery from loss. Talk with them to help them make sense of the situation.
- **Notice the strengths and resources** the young person has and tell them.
- **Actively seek connection with colleagues/friends** and discuss what the children and young people are telling you. Together, you may develop ideas which will support the whole school community/family.

Using Stories to Explore Feelings

- Story-telling is a powerful way of processing our experiences and reading and writing stories can be helpful to start a conversation with children and young people about difficult topics.
- **Therapeutic stories help children to explore strong feelings**. The Adventures of the Little Elf therapeutic stories have been created by Nottinghamshire EPS to help primary school children explore strong feelings associated with the return to school after coronavirus.
- **Little Parachutes.com**: an online library of picture books that help young children understand different situations.
- **Social Stories and Comic Strip Conversations** help children and young people to make sense of social situations which might be confusing, including changes affecting school communities.
- **Drawing a 'road map'** to help a child/young person map out the story of their life including recent events. All you need is a blank piece of paper and a pen and this can help to start a conversation.

How to Use Active Listening

- **Give your full attention to the child**. Ask other adults to support you to give space and time to a child who needs it, e.g. by helping manage your other commitments.
- Make **eye contact** and **stop other things you are doing**. For younger children, get down to the child's level. Some children and young people may wish to sit alongside you rather than face to face or complete an activity while talking e.g. drawing, walking.
- **Reflect or repeat back** what they are saying and what they may be feeling to make sure you understand.
- **Be curious, accepting and patient**.
- Consider how does the child know that you are listening? What verbal and non-verbal clues are you giving?
- Click here for More information about Active Listening.

Further Resources

NSPCC Guidance for Parents on 'Talking about Difficult Topics'

Talking to kids and teens about world trauma

Supporting Young People's Mental Health During Times of Disruption

BPS Talking to Children about Coronavirus

Information Pack 2: Adult Wellbeing – Staff and Parents/Carers

Returning to school: The psychology of staff wellbeing

Change brings discomfort and that's natural

Schools, like other organisations, have unwritten or unspoken rules of "*The way we do things around here*" (Schein, 2010). These implicit assumptions or group norms help create your school's culture and these provide a level of consistency and a sense of safety in our every-day work. The effects of a critical incident or a traumatic event are likely to upset this careful balance. Your school is likely to feel different as the culture has shifted and new patterns of behaviours may be expected. It is natural to feel discomfort when this level of change occurs in our workplace.

Focus upon your strengths and make use of your school values

Remember the things that were important to you as a school community before the event including your ethos and your values. Remind yourselves and your children and young people of the things that are still the same. Throughout the difficult period, what strengths did you draw on and how did you support the wellbeing of staff? How will your school's strengths and values help you to prepare for and feel confident about the transition back to 'new normal'? There will be opportunities and challenges ahead. What are the things you anticipate you may need extra support with? What can you put in place as a staff to support your own wellbeing as much as possible during this period?

Wellbeing first at first; curriculum focus on wellbeing and resilience

The environment surrounding performance management and academic expectations is likely to have shifted as there is a need to place an emphasis on emotional 'healing', building resilience and restoring of social relationships, for staff and children and young people alike. Learning, growth and development need the secure foundation of a sense of safety and emotional readiness. This will require schools to cultivate opportunities to offer emotional support across the community; to one another as staff, to children and young people and to parents. By putting your wellbeing first, you are investing in your school and parent/children and young people growth, embedding positive mental health as a key function within the system to strengthen the school community (Glazzard, 2019).

Support yourself in managing emotions that parents/carers may present

There will be parents/carers who have experienced difficulties throughout this time and who have mixed emotions about returning to school. It is natural to want to try and solve the problem, but you won't necessarily have all the answers and that's ok. Your qualities and interpersonal skills, such as active listening, empathy and unconditional positive regard will be enough. Remember that every positive interaction is an intervention in itself (Treisman, 2017). However, it is equally important to remember that this situation has affected the whole community in different ways. If you don't feel confident or emotionally able to address a parental concern, this is natural. Someone else might be better placed to offer this support. We are humans first and school staff second. Reach out to your own support networks if you need to.

School Planning Tool for Staff Wellbeing

Promoting staff wellbeing in your school

Questions to prompt reflection and action

1 PROMOTING WELLBEING AWARENESS

Does your school have a policy specific to staff wellbeing?

Are policies and processes implemented clearly and equitably?

Is there a designated staff member who leads on promoting staff wellbeing?

Is there a working group/network, with a representative range of staff members, who are focusing upon promoting staff wellbeing?

Is staff wellbeing on your weekly staff meeting agenda and your weekly SLT meeting agenda?

Do you have systems in place to gather views of all staff?

How do you support your staff's understanding of mental health and wellbeing?

What support is available for staff members to check-in and access support around their mental health and wellbeing, if and when needed?

Is there clear communication to staff about both internal and external pathways to support?

Does your school have a staff member peer support or buddy system in place?

2 DEVELOPING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

How do you support positive staff-staff relationships in school?

How do you support positive staff-children and young people relationships in school?

How do you support positive children and young people-children and young people relationships in school?

How do you support positive parent-parent relationships in school?

How do you support positive staff-parent relationships in school?

How do you support positive children and young people-parent relationships in school?

In what ways do you involve parents in the school community?

3 MEETING HUMAN NEEDS

Is there a space for staff members that is dedicated and protected?

Is this space appealing and comfortable?

Are basic toiletries available in the staff toilets?

Are there inspirational quotes or artwork where staff members spend their time?

Is the dishwasher loaded/unloaded or washing up carried out?

Is there tea, coffee, cakes, biscuits or fruit available in the staffroom?

Is it free? Is there an opportunity to offer a weekly hot lunch for staff members?

Is there an opportunity to provide food when school commitments lead to missing meals?

Is there a way of protecting lunchtimes and break times, as 'breaks' i.e. no working time?

Could lunch be provided on training days?

Are staff members offered any reflection time as part of their school day?

4 ENCOURAGING A WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Is there an expectation that all staff members run after school clubs?

Can staff members request toil or do you offer additional leave for family commitments?

Is there a work e-mail curfew (particularly relating to sending e-mails to parents)?

Do staff members' e-mail signatures note the days that they do not work?

Are there inclusive social gatherings arranged and times when staff members can socialise?

Does the school offer flexibility in working during PPA time, which may include working from home? Do discussions take place about how to manage workload?

Are there opportunities to negotiate workload?

How much autonomy do staff members have or feel they have over their workload?

5 SHOWING APPRECIATION

How are work achievements of all staff members celebrated in the school?

Are additional tasks, that go above and beyond, acknowledged and by whom?

In what way is appreciation encouraged between staff members (e.g. silent stars)?

6 DEVELOPING A POSTIVE ETHOS AND VALUES

What are the signs that your school is a trusting and caring environment?

How would others, who are part of your school community (staff, children and young people, parents), describe the culture and identity of the school?

What does respect mean to you within your school?

Are Restorative Principles embedded within your school?

How does the school value its employees and invest in them?

Is there permission and time for humour and fun (adult to adult; adult to children and young people; children and young people to children and young people)? Does the language being heard reflect the ethos of the school (adult to adult; adult to children and young people; children and young people to children and young people)?

How does the culture and ethos of the school encourage open communication, particularly when it comes to talking about concerns?

How have visitors coming into school talked about their first impressions and atmosphere of the school?

Are staff given permission to think about their wellbeing and is this given priority?

Questions derived from what has worked well in Nottinghamshire schools.

Individual Adult Wellbeing Reflection Tool

May be useful for school staff, professionals and parents/carers. Consider completing/discussing this tool with your own support networks.

Five key principles to support emotional health and wellbeing in the aftermath of a crisis	Questions to ask yourself and reflect upon
Emotional wellbeing first – for everyone	*When I am feeling emotionally well, what sort of things am I typically doing?* *What can I do to demonstrate to myself and to others that I am prioritising emotional wellbeing?*
Reaffirm strengths and core values	*What am I good at, and how do I know this?* *What do other people value in me?* *What motivates me, what are my passions?* *What matters to me most, and why do these things matter to me?* *What can I do to reaffirm to myself and to others what I value most?*
Place relationships front and centre	*What are the relationships in my life that are most important to me?* *Who are the people that support me when I am feeling emotionally vulnerable?* *What 'shared experiences' have supported these relationships?* *How do these relationships positively affect my sense of belonging and my experience of trust?* *What can I do to show myself and others that I value my relationships?*
Reaffirm safety and routines	*What is it that makes me feel safe, and what do I do to bring this about?* *Which are the routines in my life which ground me?* *What can I do to reaffirm the things that make me feel grounded and safe?*
Acknowledge loss, change and bereavement	*In what ways have I experienced loss, change or bereavement over the last few weeks?* *What have I done that has helped me to stay grounded in the face of this loss and change?* *What can I do to remind myself of what works for me when I encounter loss, change or bereavement in the future?*

Returning to school: Advice for school staff supporting parents and carers

Adapted from (Wakefield Educational Psychology Service (EPS), 2020)

The return to school after a critical incident may be a time of significant change and worry for some parents and carers. They may have concerns about:

- How their child will settle back into class or the school routine.
- Any lasting emotional impact of recent events, including experiences of loss and bereavement.
- Any lasting impact of the disruption to their child's learning and progress.
- Their child being able to re-establish friendships and relationships in the class/school.
- Their child's safety, particularly when the critical incident relates to a public health matter and their child has existing health concerns.

It is important for schools and educational settings to recognise the feelings and concerns of parents and carers and pro-actively seek to reduce potential anxieties. Parents and carers should be assured that feelings of worry are understandable and normal in such circumstances.

Strategies for supporting all parents and carers

- Ensure effective and enhanced **communication** in the lead up to any return to school. This will support information sharing on both sides and offer parents and carers an opportunity to share information that may impact on the children and young peoples' return to school, or the educational setting. For example, have they experienced bereavement and loss as a result of the crisis, have there been any changes within the family?
- **Make parents and carers aware of all plans** that are being implemented for transitioning children and young people back into school or educational setting. Make sure they know that safety measures will be put in place and how they will be implemented in school.
- Parents and carers may appreciate **information about changes** that they can prepare their child for e.g. different staff, classroom, routines, any changes that have occurred in school.
- Offer a **key point of contact** for questions and concerns. Parents and carers may have more queries than would typically be expected at this stage of the school year.
- Once children and young people return to the school or educational setting, parents and carers may continue to need an **enhanced level of contact**. They may need space and opportunity to talk to staff about the settling in process more frequently than might typically be planned.
- Share information with parents and carers about the **emotional support** that will be in place for all children and young people in the coming weeks (and months if necessary).
- Make parents and carers aware of how any **impact on learning** will be addressed over the coming months.
- Share practical information about **routines** and what the first few weeks will look like.

Additional suggestions for supporting parents and carers of children entering Reception or Year 1

- Parents and carers may need **greater sensitivity and flexibility in how they separate from their child at the start of the day**. Work with parents and carers to make this an emotionally supportive process for them, as well as their child.
- Consider how you can **enhance home-school communication** in the initial weeks.
- Staff should consider how they can **be available to talk to parents or carers** at the start and end of day or check in throughout the day. Parents and carers may need more contact, and over a longer period than is typically expected at this point in the academic year. This may mean that an extra member of staff is required to support classroom routines at that time to make key staff available.
- Resources and books such as 'The Invisible String' (written by Patrice Karst) can also help parents to **feel connected to their child when they are separated**.

Additional suggestions for supporting parents and carers of children and young people leaving the school or educational setting (e.g. Year 6 or Year 11 moving to a different setting)

- Make **parents and carers aware of all plans** that are being implemented for transition and the enhanced arrangements on offer. Explain what is different about the process of transition this year.
- Consider how **staff can say 'goodbye'** to parents and carers, as well as to the children and young people, for anyone not returning to school this academic year.
- Let parents and carers know **what information has been shared with their child's new school**, so that they feel assured that information has been effectively shared.
- Ensure that parents and carers are given adequate and enhanced opportunity to **share their views** and information about their child in advance of transition.
- **Personal contact** (by telephone call or email) from the class teacher/ form tutor / head of year will likely be appreciated by most parents and carers.
- Ensure parents and carers are aware of the **contact that there has been between the two learning settings** so that they feel assured that information has been effectively shared.
- Ensure parents and carers know who the **key points of contact are in the new school** and assure them of their readiness and availability to answer questions and talk to them.
- All the above points may need to be offered at an enhanced level for children and young people with identified needs and known vulnerabilities. Make sure that **parents and carers understand and know about the additional support** and provisions that are being put in place (as appropriate).

Further Sources of Support for Adult Wellbeing

BPS Guidance for Keyworker Parents

BPS Teacher Resilience During coronavirus school closures

Anna Freud Centre Supporting Staff Wellbeing in Schools Guidance

www.samaritans.org or Freephone 116 123

Mind Charity

NHS Mental Health Helplines

Information Pack 3: Loss, Bereavement and Change

Guiding Principles

Every time life changes, something is lost. Loss is therefore a big part of life and some common areas of loss that children and young people face include:

- Familiar environments
- Significant adults
- Friendships
- Opportunities
- Experience of death

Different people experience loss in different ways, and this applies to the children and young people and the adults supporting them. After a big change, it is important to start by reflecting on the different experience of loss that everyone in the school community has had.

Grief is a normal reaction to loss and each of us will experience change in a unique way. We cannot assume we know how children and young people will experience grief based on our own experiences. The following principles should be at the heart of effective support for children and young people:

1. All children and young people need **support from trusted and familiar adults** and some may require more individualised support.
2. **Experience of loss is unique** so the child/young person's perspective must be considered; adults need to 'tune in' to a child's individual experience.
3. Children and young people are **active in constructing their recovery** from loss.
4. A **knowledge base of loss and bereavement** is empowering and gives confidence to those giving support, accepting and understanding that children's responses will take many forms.
5. **Good support leads to healthy grieving** and helps **build resilience for the future**.

Talking to Children and Young People about Loss, Bereavement and Change

- **It's good to talk and to listen**; create opportunities to talk and listen to your child/young person.
- Use **simple, clear language** and be **prepared to repeat topics** and discussion, as needed. When people have strong emotions, it is often difficult for them to process information and to recall this in the future.
- **Encourage questions** and remember that you do not have to have all the answers.
- Demonstrate **empathy and emotional understanding**.
- Apply the **Goldilocks Principle** i.e. tell the child what they want to know, not too much and not too little, using language the child can understand. Keep in mind your child's age and ability when talking to them about loss, bereavement and change. (See **winstonswish.org** for more information about children's understanding of death at different ages).
- **Recognise your own emotional response** to the situation and reflect with colleagues/friends on who is best placed to listen to your child.
- Help your child to be **active in constructing their recovery** from loss.

Helping People Express Grief

Consider a **whole-school remembrance event** and **involve all members of the school community in the planning** of this event. This idea may also be relevant for marking a significant change in a school community.

For example:
- Gain ideas from staff, parents and children and young people for what a whole school event might look like.
- Children and young people working in smaller groups to contribute to a whole school event, e.g. assemblies where/when appropriate.
- Consider planning how to mark key dates in the future e.g. anniversaries.

The following are some examples of activities which children/young people may wish to do to help them express their grief:
- Writing letters and poems.
- Drawing pictures.
- Making a display.
- Sending off balloons.
- Lighting a candle.
- A memorial (for example, planting a tree).
- Curating a memory box.

A knowledge base of loss and bereavement

It can be helpful for adults supporting children and young people to know about psychological models of loss and grief. The Dual Process Model (Stroebe & Schut, 1999) tells us that rather than thinking about grief as a neat process with clear stages, it is helpful to think about how a person is always looking back, processing the loss and also moving towards the future. People will frequently move between the two. This may continue for many years, as remembering is a part of processing and understanding the feelings of loss.

Dual Process Model of Coping with Loss

(Stroebe & Schut, 1999)

When might a child/young person need more support?

It is important that the school community is given time and opportunity to develop new routines and supportive relationships to provide adults and children with a feeling of safety. This will take time and for many children and young people this will be enough. For others, additional support may be required within school or from external agencies such as the Educational Psychology Service, counselling services, mental health services etc. In these circumstances start by asking yourself and the child's trusted adults the following questions:

- Are the child's feelings associated with loss preventing them from learning and taking part in school life?
- Is the child's behaviour a concern to themselves and others?
- Does the child seem excessively distressed and unhappy?
- Does the child seem lethargic, depressed and hopeless?
- Have you tried to support the child within their family and their school's own resources?
- Has the child asked for help?
- Does the child want additional help?

...and then consider the least intrusive intervention that might be effective.

> **"Traumatic experiences can upset and distress us. They arouse powerful and disturbing feelings in us which usually settle in time, without any professional help."**
>
> ***(Royal College of Psychiatrists)***

Who to contact?

Winston's Wish website and National Helpline 08452 030405

Cruse Bereavement Care website and National Helpline 0808 808 1677

Local Educational Psychology Service and CAMHS

Local Charities who support with loss and bereavement e.g. Child Bereavement Network, (search for your local branch) Simon Says (Hampshire)

Child Bereavement UK

Compassionate Friends is a charity who support parents with the death of a child

More information about Active Listening

Information Pack 4: Targeted Groups and Individuals (e.g. children and young people in vulnerable situations)

After a critical incident, think about who in your school community would be considered to be most vulnerable in relation to the current situation. Remain open and avoid making assumptions about how people may respond to the incident. Monitor the wellbeing of all adults and children and young people in your community as those who were not previously identified as vulnerable may need additional support as a result of the critical incident. Reflect on how things are progressing and adjust as you go (CASEL, 2020). Your local Educational Psychology Service can offer advice and guidance on individual and group support, particularly for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The following groups may need careful consideration and additional support. Remember that these children and young people may also show resilience in response to the critical incident, supported by the presence of protective factors.

- Those immediately impacted by the critical incident e.g. children of keyworkers in coronavirus pandemic, children and young people who have been bereaved, children and young people within minority communities.
- Children in Care/Previously in Care.
- Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
- Children and young people at key points of transition, including those starting school for the first time.
- Children and young people with Social Workers.
- Young Carers.
- Children and young people living in poverty.

Use data to monitor the wellbeing of all of these groups during the return to school and consider if any individual children/young people may need an individual support plan (see example opposite).

Supporting Transition Back into Education Setting/School: Individual Support Plan

Name of child/young person:		
Key Adults (e.g. parent carer/s, social worker, designated teacher, trusted adult in school, other/s): *We recover from difficult events in the context of the relationships that we have. Our interventions and plans therefore need to be centred around the safe/trusted relationships that our children/ young people have.*		
What are our child's hopes? Does our child have any concerns/worries about transition back to school/education setting?		
Focus	**What is already working/ strengths to build on?**	**What else needs to happen? What/who/when**
Who are the child's key adults/support network?		
Consider the Graduated Response to Recovery, what feels important for our child? What needs to be happening support our child best (e.g. be creative, part time transition, specific needs etc)? Do we need to think about any key transition points e.g. year 6 into year 7?		
What else do we need to consider?		

Information Pack 5: Curriculum Support

If children/young people have been absent from usual school for some time, there will need to be adjustments to the curriculum and how it is taught. Making these adjustments will support emotional wellbeing and learning.

Guiding Principles

- **Curiosity and valuing**: Valuing what the child has been doing – finding out about their experiences and what they have been learning, using this to engage them in learning by making connections between what you are doing now and what you have been doing at home (or at school).
- **Meta-learning**: Seeing learning broadly beyond school work and identifying the learning they have done – using meta-learning principles to make it explicit for the child.
- **Adjust expectations and creatively prioritise**: Think about the skills and content you want them to learn – prioritise and permission to be creative and use cross-curricula learning. Genuine and realistic planning promoting a broad and ambitious curriculum.
- **Embed social emotional learning in the curriculum**.
- **Plan to regulate emotions (adult and child)**: Assuming children and young people will be working hard to regulate emotions and will need explicitly planned times to do this – even at a universal level, led by the teacher.
- **Re-teach rules and routines** of school-based learning. Assuming that children and young people may need re-teaching how to 'be' in the classroom.

What do I do?

Curriculum Planning

- **Informal teacher assessment** over time is likely to be most useful for determining gaps in learning skills and content. Formal assessment to determine gaps in learning is likely to be less effective as children and young people will be out of routine and practice.
- **Being Creative**. Create lessons which support "**autonomy, a sense of competence and relatedness**" (Fisher. 2020) This will help children and young people develop the motivation to re-engage with learning.
- **Broad and balanced curriculum** – refresh and deliver core subjects and practice skills, as a way of engaging children and young people and building in success/sense of achievement / enjoyment/self-esteem. Cross-curricular approaches may also fit more with what many children and young people who haven't engaged in 'formal' teacher-set learning have been completing at home, subject to the subject area and learning needs of children and young people with SEND.
- **Acknowledge where we are honestly and without judgement**: Think carefully about which areas of the curriculum to prioritise. Prioritisation within subjects of the most important components for progression is likely to be more effective than removing subjects, which children and young people may struggle to pick up again later. Recognise that some are likely to return with some anxiety and lack of practice (Liberty, 2017). What does the child/young person need to move on to the next stage/phase of education?
- **Meta-cognition, i.e. learning how to learn**. Make learning skills explicit and re-teach as needed, making links to all subjects. The aim is for children and young people to be skilled and independent learners.
- **Timetable and teach about emotional regulation**. E.g. hand model of the brain, understanding anxiety, discussing helpful strategies for managing emotions.

Classroom management

- **Discipline = to teach**. Remember children and young people of all ages will need the routines and rules of 'learning in school' teaching and re-teaching: verbally and visually.
- Be careful how you refer to children and young people's experiences and be mindful of the language you use, e.g. saying "we've all been learning in different ways" rather than "you haven't done much learning, have you?"
- **Repeat information and explanation**; many children and young people will be anxious at the outset of a return to school and so find it hard to process verbal information. Be patient, consistent and kind as you and your children and young people re-learn about being at school.
- Schedule physically calming activities and active brain breaks throughout the day, e.g. 5 minutes in every lesson. Expect these to be necessary given the transition from working at home to working in school. See resources for ideas.

When might a child need more support for their learning?

Each child's strengths, needs, situation and future goals will be unique. Planning for interventions will need to be done at an individual level. Plan on the basis of the educational needs of children and young people. Curriculum planning should be informed by an assessment of children and young people's starting points and addressing the gaps in their knowledge and skills, in particular making effective use of regular formative assessment (for example, quizzes, observing children and young people in class, talking to children and young people to assess understanding, scrutiny of their work). Sometimes then children might be grouped according to need and receive an intervention together. Boosting some children's learning is likely to be needed.

For example,

- Where a core skill has lost momentum e.g. a child was on the brink of grasping reading/decoding and then had a gap off school.
- When a child is disengaged from much of their learning and needs support for motivation and confidence.
- If they are approaching formal exams and they need support to be able to get a grade needed for their next phase of learning.

See supplementary online resources for examples of return to school curriculum resources following the coronavirus pandemic https://www.aep.org.uk/recovery-re-introduction-renewal/.

Appendix 1: Graduated Response School Checklist/Reflection Tool

5 Key Principles of Recovery	What is already working/strengths to build on?	What else needs to happen? What/who/when?
Put emotional wellbeing first – for everyone		
Place relationships front and centre		
Reaffirm safety and routines		
Reaffirm school's strengths and core values		
Acknowledge loss change and bereavement		

Targeted Support		
Who are our targeted groups?	What is already working/ strengths to build on?	What else needs to happen? What/who/when?

Individual Support		
Children and young people/Name	Individual Support Plan Completed?	Key Worker/Key Adult Identified?

References

Barnardos. (2020). Time for a Clean Slate; Children's Mental Health at the Heart of Education. Retrieved from https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/time-for-clean-slate-mental-health-at-heart-education-report.pdf

Biborough Educational Psychology Consultation Service . (2020). Transition, recovery and learning in the aftermath of a pandemic. A resource for nursery and primary schools and A resource for secondary schools. Retrieved from http://services2schools.org.uk/Services/4698

Brewin, C. R. (2000). Meta-analysis of risk factors for posttraumatic stress disorder in trauma-exposed adults. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 68*(5), 748–766.

British Psychological Society (BPS). (2020). *A resilience and coping framework for supporting transitions back to school*. Leicester: BPS.

CASEL. (2020). An initial guide to leveraging the power of social and emotional learning as you prepare to re-open and re-new your school community. Retrieved from https://casel.org/resources-covid/

Durlak, J. A. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development, 82*(1), 405-432.

Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). (2018). Sutton Trust-Education Endowment Foundation Teaching and Learning Toolkit. London. Retrieved from https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit

Glazzard, J. a. (2019). The Impact of Teacher Wellbeing and Mental Health on Children and young people Progress in Primary Schools. *Journal of Public Mental Health*.

Herman, J. (2015). *Trauma and recovery*. New York: Basic Books.

Huppert, F., & Johnson, D. (2010). A controlled trial of mindfulness training in schools; the importance of practice for an impact on wellbeing. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 5*(4), 264-274.

Joseph, S. (2012). *What doesn't kill us: The new psychology of posttraumatic growth*. London: Piatkus Little Brown.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2012). *Mindfulness for Beginners: reclaiming the present moment - and your life*. Colorado: Sounds True Inc.

Khanlou, N., & Wray, R. (2014). A Whole Community Approach toward Child and Youth Resilience Promotion: A Review of Resilience Literature. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addition, 12*, 64-79.

Maasten. A., B. A. (2018). Resilience in Children: Developmental Perspectives. *Children (Basel, Switzerland)*, 5(7), 98.

Martin, A., & Marsh, H. W. (2006). Academic resilience and its psychological and educational correlates: A construct validity approach. *Psychology in the Schools, 43*, 267-282.

Maslow, A. H. (1987). *Motivation and personality*. Delhi: Pearson Education.

Masten, A. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist, 56*(3), 227-238.

Masten, A. (2018). Resilience Theory and Research on Children and Families: Past, Present, and Promise. *Journal of Family Theory and Review, 10*(1), 12-31.

Meredith, M. (2020). Meredith, M. (2020, April 14). Five ways to help children heal when schools reopen. Retrieved from https://marymered.wordpress.com/2020/04/14/five-ways-to-help-children-heal-when-schools-reopen/

National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS). (2016). *Responding to critical incidents: NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools*. Dublin: Department of Education and Skills.

NHS Education for Scotland. (2017). *Transforming Psychological Trauma: A knowledge and skills framework for the scottish workforce*. Edinburgh: NHS Education for Scotland.

O'Dell, K. (2014). *Quantitative and Qualitative report on the impact of 'Take 5' at School*. Each Amazing Breath CIC.

OPM. (2016). *HeadStart Newham Evaluation: Young Minds school staff training project report*.

Public Health England. (2016). *The mental health of children and young people in England*. London: Crown Copyright.

Robson, C., & McCartan, K. (2015). *Real world research* (4th ed.). Chichester: Wiley.

Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass (A Wiley Imprint).

Seligman M.E.P., C. M. (2014). Positive Psychology: An Introduction. In *Flow and the Foundations of Positive Psychology*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Sivers, S. W. (2020). Children and young people views around the Covid-19 pandemic: an opportunity for change in education? Retrieved from https://edpsy.org.uk/features/2020/children and young people-views-around-the-covid-19-pandemic-an-opportunity-for-change-in-education/

Treisman, K. (2017). *A Therapeutic Treasure Deck of Grounding, Soothing, Coping and Regulating Cards*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers: UK.

Wakefield Educational Psychology Service (EPS). (2020). Wakefield Educational Psychology Service (2020). Covid-19 advice for schools: Transitions and back to school. Retrieved from http://wakefield.mylocaloffer.org/educational-psychology-service

Acknowledgements

Written by Nottinghamshire Educational Psychology Service, supported by schools and educational services across Nottinghamshire.

Dedicated to all of the school staff, parents, carers and professionals who have kept education going during challenging times linked to the coronavirus pandemic.

Design: Christina Newman, Black Dog Design, Buckingham

© Crown copyright (08/2020)
This Handbook is licensed under the Open Government Licence 3.0.

info@wholeschoolsend.com

020 3925 3596

01827 311500

www.sendgateway.org.uk

Funded by:

Department
for Education