Health and Wellbeing – Reconnection and Recovery for schools – Information for staff

Purpose

In response the ongoing Covid19 pandemic, young people have experienced significant levels of disruption and difference to their educational experiences and everyday life. Following the period of lockdown and the emergent phases of easing it is essential that we now prepare ourselves to best support all pupils returning to full time school attendance in August 2020. This document is designed to provide school staff with key advice and information to support this transition back to school environments. This guidance also links well with the Growing Confidence work embedded across all Scottish Borders schools and it would be useful to reflect back on the sessions including the virtual reconnector session held in June for key staff in each school.

Re-establishing and reconnecting young people with familiar routines, structures and expectations within the both the school and classroom environments will be fundamental to creating a supportive context for their return. Most young people will have been at home for a number of weeks. Some will have attended the Summer Childcare Hubs.

At the heart of promoting and supporting young people's health and wellbeing is the provision of trusting and nurturing relationships with key adults. Scottish Borders Council (SBC) are committed to supporting all school staff to further develop their understanding of nurture and formal training for everyone is likely to take place in November 2020. In anticipation, the following guidance provides information and useful links that build upon nurturing approaches to help support young people to reconnect and recover their learning potential with school staff and each other.

It is not possible to know or fully understand how the current situation might have had an impact on mental health and wellbeing. The approach outlined in this document is therefore a strength based in supporting children and young people and staff to cope with the new challenges ahead.

Ways to welcome everyone back to school

There are many ways to do this. You will want to consider what will work best for your young people, school and community e.g. a video or letter from staff that could be posted on the school website or emailed to parents, individual class/group circles and connecting with individual young people. Plan how you will spend the first session - reconnecting, sharing, listening (encourage empathetic responses), observing and supporting. Be curious about the

things young people, parents and colleagues are saying. This will give some indication of the things that could be causing them anxiety.

Ask people to share what they have been doing in lockdown (e.g. pictures, stories). Support people to find the positives in their experiences of Covid19. For example, what has worked well at this time? What lessons can be learned from this experience?

Within primary schools the Building Resilience resource will support discussions with the children, reflecting on how 'Skipper' has managed the challenges he has faced.

Thinking about what young people need when they first start school is a helpful starting point for thinking about what all learners might need.

How to manage uncertainty

Communication is key. Be clear on what we know and what is yet to be decided. Much remains unknown. For example, the impact of re-opening schools and other amenities on the spread of Covid-19. There has been suggestions of localized lockdowns in areas where there is an increase in the number of cases. Support people to manage the uncertainty of the future by providing reassurances that we are working with the National Government and appropriate partner agencies (such as Health) to keep everyone safe. We are living in unprecedented times. Anxieties around academic progress should be reduced.

Supporting through Nurturing relationships[1]

The Six Nurture Principles are useful to support young people to recover from the unprecedented changes in their daily routine resulting from Covid19. Applying nurturing approaches for our return to educational establishments enable us to focus on reconnection and recovery in the face of adversity. This document will use these principles as a framework to support all young people to transition back to school.

The Six Nurture Principles

1. Learning is understood developmentally

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[1] **Useful resources:**
- **Dr. Chris Moore – creating the conditions and nurture principles**
https://www.epinsight.com/post/supporting-post-lockdown-education-using-the-6-principles-of-nurture

This principle requires staff to accept children at their age and stage of development. Skills and competencies will differ and individuals will make progress at their own pace.

The Recovery Curriculum (https://www.evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum/) clearly states that Health and Wellbeing will be prioritised as young people return to school.   There are some unhelpful narratives in the media about helping children to 'catch up' following this period of home learning. Initially our focus should be on creating and promoting conditions for emotional wellbeing in order that pupils can return to effective and efficient learning over time. Some strategies to support this are:

- Repeat and reinforce previous concepts and skills.
- Revisit past topics and remind children of their previous success.
- Provide further opportunities for success. Remember not all children and young people will want the same type of recognition. Think about what will work for individuals.
- The return to school should be fun. Having high academic expectations too soon could add to young people's stress.
- Break tasks down into smaller steps, with clear and simple instructions and active modelling from key adults.
- Provide opportunities for choice in the curriculum. Allow children & young people to personalise their learning, making it meaningful for them. Promote special interests within the curriculum. This will support young people, making them feel understood, valued and successful.
- Let young people know what they are doing well, complement their effort and persistence whilst emphasizing they are making progress and getting better.
- Put setbacks into perspectives and emphasize learning through practice. Challenge negative concepts (e.g. 'catching up') by recognizing individual progress.
- Talk about previous difficulties and challenges that have been overcome, individually and collectively. Discuss what helped and how it was tackled. Talk about the strengths there are within the community.

Introduction to Growth Mindsets:

- https://www.tes.com/news/pedagogy-focus-growth-mindset

2. The Classroom offers a secure base

The organisation of the learning environment is important for containing anxiety. Due to Covid-19 restrictions how learning environments are arranged and managed may look and feel very different from what children have experienced before.

- Structure, routine and predictability:

  Explain, discuss and revisit the new requirements. Think about how you will convey the 'new normal', such as hand washing and physical distancing. Provide reassurance by focussing on what we can do to keep ourselves and others safe (e.g. cleaning equipment and handwashing). Ongoing explanations and discussion will be needed. Do not assume that everyone will know what to do and why they should be doing it. There will be children and young people who are concerned about the risks. Give them a chance to ask questions and be reassured. Use visual prompts to reinforce new structures and routines.

  Be patient. Everyone is making transitions to new circumstances e.g. having been at home or working in a Hub. We should treat the return to school like it is a new start and apply the principles attached to such a time - go gradually and slowly. Think enhanced transition. Some young people may take longer and need more graduated returns than others. Be flexible and respond to individual needs.

  You need strategic and individual classroom planning that promotes connection and meets National Guidance. Visuals have great impact and support many learners, so use them to full effect. Consider your young people with Additional Support Needs who will require a more individualised response. The Circle Inclusive Classroom Scale can support you with this task.

Useful resources:

Here Carol Gray gives advice on creating Social Stories for coming back to school.

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

CIRCLE RESOURCE – to support inclusive learning for Primary and Secondary schools

3. The importance of Nurture for wellbeing and self-esteem

This principle ensures that we value young people and hold them in a high positive regard. In our nurturing relationships with young people we can further promote their resilience and a sense of optimism. Some useful ideas you may consider are:

- Some young people may have been shielding with family and have limited contact with larger groups. They may be feeling apprehensive about contact with a large number of people.
- You may want to consider reinstating/ identifying key adults/ points of contact for children, young people and their families to ensure good communication.
- Allow time to share and discuss. Think about the conversations you will have and how you will have them. Think about the language and words that you use.
- Ensure a co-ordinated approach between staff. For example, in High Schools staff should be open to discussions around young people's experiences rather than each subject teacher scheduling time for this to take place.
- Think about the language you use e.g. "I've missed you", "I'm looking forward to getting to know you"
- Create a sense of identity and belonging.
- Provide reassurances and explicit messages to children we have established relationships with that we have held them in mind over this time e.g. "I've missed all our jokes."

Growing Confidence & Building Resilience Resources on GLOW

4. Language is a vital means of communication

This principle focuses on supporting young people to put their feelings into words, and for adults to reflect on the language used to support young people to manage powerful emotions.

- Help children and young people put their feelings into words.

  Teach the vocabulary of emotion and support young people to label these emotions. Reflecting on how other people react or feel in different situations (externalising) can help people think about their own feelings. For younger learners, the Disney Pixar Film Inside Out is a great example of emotional literacy. For older learners, superhero films can be just as powerful. Choose films, clips, books and stories that are engaging and age appropriate. Support them to think about the characters' journeys, struggles and conflicts, strengths and weaknesses, their unrealised potential...do they have experiences that relate to these characters?

Provide young people with different ways of accessing support with emotions e.g. a social story, a card they can show to an adult when they need a break, a coded word that can be agreed upon in advance, or pastoral support.

- Help young people manage their emotions. Offer creative and experiential ways for them to express themselves e.g. art, music and drama.

Useful resources:

- o PACE framework below (Appendix 1)
- o https://www.emotionworks.org.uk/
- o https://zonesofregulation.com/index.html
- o https://www.emotioncoachinguk.com/
- o Watch this video of Karen Treisman reminding us that 'every interaction can be an intervention': **https://youtu.be/dOkyKyVFnSs**
   https://youtu.be/ZcDLzppD4Jc

- Be prepared to talk about bereavement, loss and grief

Covid19 has had a dramatic impact on our day to day life and some people may have experience of loss (e.g. daily routine, employment).

Some people will have experienced the death of a loved one. This may be related or unrelated to Covid19. The experience of death will be different at this time due to the social distancing measures in place. Young people's understanding of death will vary depending on their age and stage.

Useful resources:

- o Educational Psychology Service (EPS) website
- o https://www.barnardos.org.uk/news/children-dealing-bereavement-during-lockdown

5. All behaviour is communication

This principle emphasises the importance of looking past the behaviour and reflecting on what a young person is trying to tell you?

We apply this concept to everyone in our school community - staff and parents included. When presented with a clear behavioural response we should take a step back, depersonalise it and ask 'What is this telling me?' Confusion and concern are to be expected and can subsequently lead to anxiety and related behaviours particularly

in relation to being in close proximity to others when this is something that has been discouraged for a significant period of time.

Some young people will communicate through their behaviour that they require additional supports at this time. For example, to manage bereavement or cope with anxiety. The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) has provided some guidance on their website and are offering telephone consultations with staff and parents to support young people with issues related to managing the situation around Covid19.

6. The importance of transitions

Being in lockdown has been a major transition for young people. Many have been at home for extended periods, some have been in school whilst their parents/cares have continued to function as key workers. All will have had their own unique experiences of lockdown.

Young people, parents and staff may feel anxious about the return to school. Whist transition planning can help alleviate some of this anxiety the current circumstances has not allowed for this. Young people may return to school having not experienced formal endings to last academic year or preparations for 2020-2021 (e.g. Primary 7 to S1 and Nursery to Primary 1).

Where possible, prepare everyone for any changes. If school will be different communicate how. Use technology (like virtual tours) to show people the environment they will be returning to. This will be important if there are social distancing measures in place (what will classrooms look like? How will they be staffed?) Give details of any new routines (e.g. staggered start times) and what this will mean for individuals.

When additional support may be required

As young people make the transition back to school establishments some may cope better than others particularly with regard to their social and emotional wellbeing. It will be important for staff to be mindful of this and the information provided in this document will assist you to support the majority of young people at this time.

It is expected that young people will have had varied experiences of learning and teaching since lockdown (e.g. some young people will have engaged well with home learning and others may have faced significant barriers in doing so). As young people continue to settle into new routines and recover their capacity to be efficient and effective learners our emphasis will naturally shift to reconnecting with more formal learning and teaching.

Should it appear that any young person is less responsive to universal levels of support and continues to struggle over time (e.g. with regard to social and emotional wellbeing or progress in more formal learning) then they may require more targeted intervention. This current document is designed to complement SBC Staged Intervention Model which should underpin and inform all assessment and

interventions for young people. Additional supports and useful links are also available at the end of this document.

Be aware that a young person's situation may have changed significantly since the start of lockdown and new support needs may have arisen for some whilst others may evidence unexpected progress.

Staff wellbeing

Staff have continued to support children from home during lockdown and a number of staff have also been based in the childcare Hubs over the summer. Staff may return physically and emotionally tired, and may require support to lead, manage and respond to change.

It is important to recognise that staff too have had their own experiences of Covid19. Some may have experienced bereavements and all may have a sense of loss (e.g. for life prior to the measures put in place to stop the spread of Covid-19). There may have been financial pressures within the home and a high level of anxiety around the potential spread of Covid-19 as lockdown measures are adjusted. Additionally, staff may hear distressing stories from young people and their families.

At this time it is important to amplify the supports available to staff. For example:

- Take regular opportunities to check in with staff (little and often) e.g. use of text, emails and virtual staff meetings
- Provide opportunities to staff to share experiences of lock down and talk about how they are feeling
- Think of ways staff can proactively support their wellbeing under the current Covid19 restrictions (e.g. if gyms are unavailable).
- Encourage staff to check in with each other
- Continue to provide positive feedback to ensure staff continue to feel valued and their efforts are recognised
- Communicate updates regularly with staff.
- Promote staff wellbeing (encourage regular breaks).
- Establish/res-establish peer support structures to provide formal and informal opportunities to support each other
- Model self-care and asking for support when this is required.
- Ensure staff are aware of when and how they can access mental health support

Useful resources:

- Growing Confidence & Building Resilience Resources on GLOW
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing Calendar on GLOW
- The Hive of Wellbeing and Mindfulness CLPL opportunities
- This link takes you to the Anna Freud guide for school staff about looking after ourselves.

Appendix 1

Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy

We all **communicate** something through our behaviour during **every** moment in **every** day, even if we are not aware of it. Dan Hughes' **PACE** (2012) gives us a framework to think about how we interact and communicate with children and young people.

Playfulness	Use humour and jokes to deflect, de-escalate and redirect situations. Funny repetitive games at the start of each session can help to regulate the group and create a sense of predictability. **Body language:** cheeky grin! wide open mouth! sitting forward in surprise! **Verbal language:** "hey!", "gotcha!", giggling, varying tone of voice
Acceptance	Be non-judgemental, accept people from where they are at. Again, naming what you see can help. 'I can see you are looking worried', 'It must be hard not being at home today'. **Body language:** arms open, feet firmly on the floor, taking a step back with surrender arms **Verbal language:** "help me to understand...", "I've just realised...", "let me see if I have this right..."
Curiosity	Don't assume! Ask when you are not sure and if they seem unsure you could 'wonder aloud' and see if this elicits a response/ thought, 'I think you are feeling a bit scared?' **Body language:** arms open, feet firmly on the floor (not crossed), leaning in, a gaze that really shows listening **Verbal language:** "I'm wondering...", "what if...", "you don't think...?", "I can see that..."
Empathy	Different from sympathy. Do not say that you know how they feel. Step into the child or young person's shoes. Ask them what is going on. Let them share their thoughts, feelings and experiences. Be there for them. **Body language:** interested and alert posture, tears in eyes (if authentic), face expressive of emotion mirroring young person's experience. **Verbal language:** "I imagine that was..", "no wonder...", "I never realised..."

Additional Resources and Links

Quarriers Resilience for Wellbeing Service

https://quarriers.org.uk/services/borders-resilience-for-wellbeing

SBC Educational Psychology Service https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/EPS

Inclusion & Wellbeing Service (Additional Needs Referral Form

SBC Framework for Staged Intervention:

SBC Inclusion Framework and Policy

See Me – Mental Health Awareness -www.seemescotland.org

What's on Your mind? – Resource pack available in every secondary school

SBC Respectful Relationships policy – anti-bullying, this is current but due to be revised this session – please refer to National Respect Me Resource

Growing Confidence programmes/resources – for staff, parents and pupils. Resources packs available in all schools. Growing Confidence & Building Resilience Resources on GLOW

Emotional Health and Wellbeing Calendar on GLOW

CIRCLE RESOURCE – to support inclusive learning for Primary and Secondary schools

Drugs, Alcohol & Tobacco curriculum – GLOW Substance Use Education

ASN Recovery Framework –sent out to all schools June 2020

Scottish Borders Guidance: a multi-agency approach to working with young people at risk of self-harm and suicide.

http://www.autismtoolbox.co.uk/

Relationships, Sexual Health & Parenthood Resources

- SfL Assessment of Need Form
- Child Planning Manual (Includes Wellbeing Web and Risk Matrix)
- Neglect Toolkit