

SEND MATTERS

Lockdown 3 edition

The official newsletter
of SEND related issues
in Bedford Borough

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WELCOME from Chief Officer for Education, SEND and School Infrastructure - Ben Pearson

This term has been a real challenge for most people – continuing with home learning, missing our friends and relatives coupled with dark, cold weather has felt really tough. However, it feels like there is some light at the end of the tunnel! The sun has started shining, flowers have started growing and we have seen local friends and colleagues receive their

COVID vaccinations – there are tangible signs of progress and of hope for us to move out of our current lockdown lives.

Please look after yourselves and each other – I look forward to being able to come together again soon.

Best wishes, Ben

LOCAL OFFER CORNER

Bedford Borough Local Offer has reintroduced its dedicated coronavirus page which can be found by [clicking here](#). This page is regularly updated with both national and local guidance and documents. You will also find helpful educational resources on this page, links to support for mental health and wellbeing support and ideas for where you can go for your daily exercise as a family.

As well as the information on the dedicated coronavirus page, you can also view the 'What's on?' page of the Local Offer to see what activities you and your family can get involved with. Check out the 'What's On?' section of the local offer by [clicking here](#).



TOP TIPS FOR HOME LEARNING

We asked Jon and Sue, our teaching and learning advisors for SEND to share some of their top tips to support parents with their child's home learning.

In these challenging times, the pressures of home learning are a constant worry for parents. We have been working with school colleagues to try and establish good practice around supporting learners with SEND through their remote provision. This brings challenges to the parents and we know that there is a risk that some of our more vulnerable learners are at a higher risk of being disproportionately disadvantaged.

As advisors, we have had the pleasure of attending PCF coffee mornings and hearing of some of the successes and some of the challenges around remote learning, for example:

- *Having 4 children who are all been asked to access live lessons at once*
- *The pace of live lessons for some learners*
- *The challenges for parents to understanding some of the content*



With this in mind, we thought we could share some of our top tips with you

- *Don't be too hard on yourself*
- *Talk to your school regularly (remember this is all new for teachers as well)*
- *Celebrate achievements together and with your school*
- *Look for opportunities for social interaction on line – ask your school to facilitate this if required*
- *Be creative and make learning fun, not only will this support academic development it can help with wellbeing - adapt tasks to your child's interests and use quizzes, play games, get involved, allow discussions*
- *Learning is gradual and not linear, it is important to support children when making mistakes*
- *Try to create a learning environment that's different to the rest of the home, for example, use a tent or den to create a distraction free environment*
- *Aim for a consistent routine, e.g. breakfast and lunch at the same time as on a normal school day*
- *Embrace flexibility that comes with remote learning, e.g. if it's easier to do maths work in the morning, but the timetable says PE, change it around*

There are some further links here that you may find useful:

- [Coronavirus Lockdown with kids: Setting a steady pace for home learning - Special Needs Jungle](#)
- [Why learning in isolation doesn't have to be an isolating learning experience. - Special Needs Jungle](#)
- [On Line Learning Tips for Autistic Learners](#)
- [Supporting Home Learning Routines](#)

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD WITH ADHD DURING LOCKDOWN

The most recent lockdown and subsequent move towards home learning for many children and young people has been challenging for young people, their parents and teachers alike. It can be particularly challenging for children with ADHD to adapt to new routines and focus on their remote learning. Below are some suggestions on how you may wish to support your child to manage home learning and behaviour during lockdown.

Structure:

Remember that children with ADHD need structure. They need their environment to structure externally what they can't structure internally on their own. Try making check lists that they can refer back to when they get lost in what they are doing. This will also help them to manage their own work load and increase their independence as learners.

Predictability and routine:

It is important to maintain consistent daily routines. Try to prepare your child for changes ahead of time, and schedule pleasant events and 'special time' with your child wherever possible.

Clear work space:

If possible, dedicate a specific work space to your child which clear is void of any distractions, including objects such as ornaments or books not it use. If space is limited, a technique called 'private office' may be helpful, place two ring binder folders around the child's work space to isolate their space and minimalise distractions.

Break tasks down:

Large tasks with multiple requirements can easily overwhelm children with ADHD. By breaking down the tasks into smaller steps, and allocating them to the child individually, the workload will feel more manageable.

Repeat directions:

Children with ADHD benefit from hearing things more than once. Repeat the directions using consistent language. Write down instructions so they can refer back to them.



Rest breaks:

Allow regular rest and movement breaks, such as leaving the work space for a different environment for a few minutes. Taking part in safe physical activity during non-screen time has the benefit of allowing children to get some needed downtime and exercise and develop physically.

Emphasise quality over quantity:

Children with ADHD may benefit from a reduced load. Emphasise quality of work over quantity of work completed.

Praise:

Praise is helpful in building self-esteem and confidence. Praise your child for little achievements, such as finishing an activity or trying to do something. Try and find positives regularly that can be rewarded with praise. Focus on effort rather than outcome.

Set aside time off screen:

There needs to be a time in the day where children are not engaged in screen time and learning. Suggest non-screen time to children for other enjoyable activities such as playing with a pet or interacting with other family members (playing cards, scrabble, talking).

For more information contact the Educational Psychology Team. We are currently offering weekly drop-in sessions for parents and schools to provide support during the lockdown. Please email [school.support@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:support@bedford.gov.uk) or call 01234 228693.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IDEAS TO DO WITH THE KIDS AT HOME

With lockdown restricting the amount of opportunities to get out and engage in physical activity with the children, we asked a local PE teacher to give us some ideas for activities you can do at home.

Regular physical activity is a normal part of a child's daily routine; this may be through attending clubs, walking to school, or simply playing at break times. The benefits of exercise are not only important for

physical wellbeing but also for supporting mental health. Over the last few lockdowns I have tried to keep my boys entertained by playing a range of games and activities. Not only do these activities support their wellbeing, but they can also be used as a great tool for developing thinking and learning skills.

Here are some of my boys' favourite games:

Reacto Game

This game can be played with any objects. It is great fun.

1. The person playing stands in the middle of a range of objects and has to respond to quickly touch whichever object is called out – in this example we have used toys e.g teddy, plane & book. You can make it harder by adding a sequence in so that the person has to copy and repeat.



2. Here we are using cones and responding to different colours being called out.
3. This game can even be played with two people, this is great as they compete with each other – the rules are the same as before; say the object and watch them respond.

These Reacto games are also great for building some academic learning into – try it by writing numbers on sheets of paper and then setting some maths sums or with key words in English and using them to fill in blanks in sentences.

Jump Jump

Very similar to the Reacto game – this game is based on sequences. We have used hurdles but anything you can get to jump over is fun.

1. One person calls out a sequence of actions that the players have to do. For example you can call out “Forward jump, Backwards Jump, Hop on one foot”
2. We used a number of commands for this game – jump, switch and hop and developed a number of combinations. For example:
 - Jump – jump – jump over forwards and backwards
 - Switch jump jump – swap places and jump over forwards and backward

This game is great as they have to work together to make sure they are making the right moves.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IDEAS TO DO WITH THE KIDS AT HOME

CONTINUED

Hoop Game

(You may need an outdoor space for this game).

The hoop version of this game needs 3 or 4 different colour hoops – the people playing run around a given area and when you shout hoop they have to move into any hoop. The leader “without looking” gives a colour hoop and if anyone is stood in that they lose a life. You can make it so that all participants must chose a different hoop or must not go in the same one on consecutive goes.

If you haven't got hoops use 3 or 4 objects and the process is the same.

Clubs and Groups

Check out some of the sporting opportunities from Bedford groups by visiting the Local Offer. Here are some you may be interested in:

No Limits Sports Zone - FREE ONLINE Dance Class
Saturdays 10am to 11am

<https://localoffer.bedford.gov.uk/kb5/bedford/directory/service.page?id=NM8TmQnubBI>

No Limits Sports Zone - FREE ONLINE Movement to Music
Thursdays 1:30pm to 2:30pm

<https://localoffer.bedford.gov.uk/kb5/bedford/directory/service.page?id=NgM5v699Evs>

Bedford Borough Sports Development Team has arranged a range of FREE online classes including Tai-Chi, Yoga and gentle exercise
www.bedfordsportlive.crd.co

FREE Online Exercise Session for Young People - replacing young minds yoga at John Bunyan Sports and Fitness Coronavirus

https://localoffer.bedford.gov.uk/kb5/bedford/directory/service.page?id=iPjJ7K_6M0k



BBPCF Update

BBPCF are the voice for Parent Carers of children & young people 0-25yrs with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities in Bedford Borough.

We feedback your views to Education, Health, Social Care and other departments that provide SEND services. BBPCF are still working to reach families in Bedford Borough. We are listening to all parent / carers of children with special educational needs and / or disabilities (SEND) aged 0-25 years. We are signposting to usable information, sharing ideas and experiences, while still fulfilling our forum duties to listen to the lived experience of parent carers and feedback to the relevant services.

BBPCF are running a series of online events for parents and carers in Bedford Borough. Ranging from parent training, to virtual get togethers and even Pilates and relaxation sessions for parent carers. You can see our calendar of events by [clicking here](#).

We have an online membership form for anyone that is involved in SEND (a diagnosis is not required to join). You can view our NEW website at www.bbpcf.co.uk. Follow us on our social media @bedsboroughpcf on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

You can follow us on
Social Media here:



SUPPORTING THE WELLBEING OF YOUR TEENAGER THIS LOCKDOWN

We asked Dawn, an Early Help Professional and Enhanced Evidence Based Practitioner to share her top tips for supporting the wellbeing of teenagers during this lockdown.

“ Honestly, there is so much going through my head I don't know where to even start, so I just don't ”

Teenager, 16



Now more than ever the wellbeing of our children and young people is at the forefront of our minds. With lockdown restrictions limiting their interaction with peers and the outside world, being glued to their laptops and devices for homeschooling and recreation, it can be difficult to determine what is 'normal teenage behaviour' and what isn't.

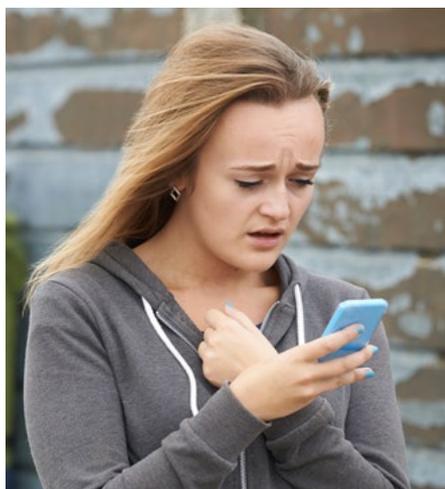
As parents, we can sometimes struggle to know what to say, when to say it, and what we can do for the best (you will not be alone if you have experienced any of those moments.)

The Teen / Adolescent stage is a difficult time for many (parents and young people), and it happens at different rates for different people. Many parents experience times of worry around some of these changes and behaviours and it can cause friction. I have a view that perhaps adolescence is nature's

way of preparing us for them to leave; If they were still those adorable little souls that needed so much of us, and from us, how bereft would we feel when the day comes for them to fly the nest?

It may help to have an idea of some of the behaviours we would commonly expect to see during this developmental stage, making it easier to determine when perhaps more support is required. Some of these are; seeking independence, rebelling against boundaries, fluctuation in emotions, low impulse control, irregular sleep patterns, curiosity and promiscuity, withdrawal from family and gravitation towards peers. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it gives an idea.

With that in mind, below are 5 top tips on how to support your young people through what is most certainly a strange and challenging time.



SUPPORTING THE WELLBEING OF YOUR TEENAGER THIS LOCKDOWN CONTINUED

5 Top Tips

1) Communication

Try to make time to communicate and demonstrate you are happy to talk/listen when they feel ready and able to do so. Do not force the situation. If you are giving instructions, be clear with them about your reasons for this and why. You are much less likely to experience resistance if they have an understanding of the rationale for things, rather than the “because I said so.” Some young people find it easier to talk when they are doing something else such as walking, cooking etc. as it is less intense. You could also encourage drawing or writing. Offer support to them through the difficulties they encounter and explore alternative thoughts to situations with them. This will help them to offload their worries and will enable them to unpick what they are feeling and why.

2) Model Calm

Young people often look to adults and how we manage situations, to gauge how they should respond. Even if anxious, try to portray a sense of calm, to encourage a measured response, and that they too can cope and manage, even in trying times.

3) Validate

Validating and empathizing with our young peoples’ thoughts and feelings can help reassure that often what they are experiencing in times of stress, worry, sadness etc. is quite normal. Do not rush to the sweeping statements such as “you’ll be fine”, as this can often feel dismissive.

4) Stay involved & encourage interests

Show a genuine interest in their day-to-day lives, their education, friendship groups, what they are watching on Netflix, be curious. Encourage them to continue with their hobbies, or start new ones, be creative. Any form of exercise is better than none and is good for both physical and mental health.

5) Healthy Routines

Keeping healthy routines in place for things such as exercise, healthy eating, and education can be key in keeping them motivated. A healthy sleep routine is also vital in helping them to feel more able to manage the day to day. A routine as close to school/college/work as possible will be helpful for when things start to return to what they were previously doing, and will not be such a shock to the system.

Further Information

More information on this, and support with how to manage some of the challenges can be found on the Early Help section of the Local Offer website - <https://localoffer.bedford.gov.uk/>.

Bedford Borough have teamed up with Professor John Coleman to create sessions for parents entitled “Teen Brain Matters for Parents” which discusses the changes your teenager goes through during adolescence. These sessions are being delivered online and you can book your place on the next session here <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/teen-brain-matters-for-parents-tickets-131195791143>. You can read Professor Coleman’s “Ten things you need to know about the teenage brain” by [clicking here](#).

If you are ever concerned that what your child/young person is experiencing is more serious, please contact your GP or NHS 111 opt 2.

Below are some apps and websites that you might find useful:

Apps

- *Headspace*
- *MindJrny*
- *Kooth*
- *Fear Tools*
- *Calm*
- *Thought Diary*

Websites

- <https://camhs.elft.nhs.uk/>
- <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help-for-parents/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>
- <https://www.headstogether.org.uk/>
- <https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/7-ways-to-support-children-and-young-people-who-are-worried/>
- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

SEND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, we have been working closely with Bedford Borough Parent Carer Forum to try and answer the most frequently asked questions they were receiving from their members. The latest FAQ document from January 2021 can be found by [clicking here](#).

Previous FAQ documents as well as other feedback and comments can always be located on the "You Said, We Did" section of the Local Offer. You can view that page [here](#).

If you have any questions that you would like to be included in any future FAQ document then please share them with the Parent Carer Forum by emailing communications@bbpcf.org.uk.



2021

Bedford Borough's SUMMER OF SEND

Throughout summer there will be a host of events, webinars, activities and training dedicated to all aspects of SEND in Bedford Borough.

There will be events for children and young people, their families and all professionals supporting them so watch this space for more information.

- SENDCo Training • Parent Carer Wellbeing •
- Shout Out to SEND Pupil Conference •
- Speech and Language Toolkit •
- Early Years SEND • And much much more...

If you have any ideas of topics or events you would like to see or if you would like to put on an event as part of the festival then please email SummerofSEND@bedford.gov.uk



KEEPING IN TOUCH

If you would like to receive emails directly into your inbox relating to SEND and general Childrens Services updates in Bedford Borough we would love for you to sign up to our Gov Delivery System.

Visit the Gov Delivery website by [clicking here](#), enter your email address and then select 'Your Child and You' to subscribe.

If you have any suggestions as to what content you would like to see in future editions of SEND Matters then please email your ideas to sendprogramme@bedford.gov.uk