

Education:

Wellbeing Renewal

Guidance for Managers and
Practitioners on Supporting and
Promoting Wellbeing



RIGHTS, RELATIONSHIPS, INCLUSION and WELLBEING:

Guidance for Practitioners and Managers

This document seeks to outline East Ayrshire Education Service's initial guidance on promoting wellbeing, preventing mental ill health and promoting positive behaviour within schools and early childhood centres as we return from lockdown. It is aimed at supporting all practitioners in their thinking and practice at a time when we are all aware that the wellbeing of the adults, children and young people across our education communities has been significantly impacted by the current Covid-19 context.

It is widely accepted that early childhood centres and schools have a broad function with regards to educating children. Articles 28 and 29 of the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) cover children's right to education and are further developed in 2001's Committee on the Rights of the Child, that explained and elaborated on the right to education.

It states:

- Education must be **child-centred, child-friendly and empowering**. This applies to the **curriculum as well as the educational processes, the pedagogical methods and the environment where education takes place**.
- Education must be provided in a way that **respects the inherent dignity of the child** and **enables the child to express his or her views** in accordance with article 12 (1) and to **participate in school life**.
- Education must **respect the strict limits on discipline reflected in article 28 and promote non-violence in school**.
- Education must **include not only literacy and numeracy but also life skills such as the ability to make well-balanced decisions; to resolve conflicts in a nonviolent manner; and to develop a healthy lifestyle, good social relationships and responsibility, critical thinking, creative talents, and other abilities which give children the tools needed to pursue their options in life**.

What is a Rights Based Approach?

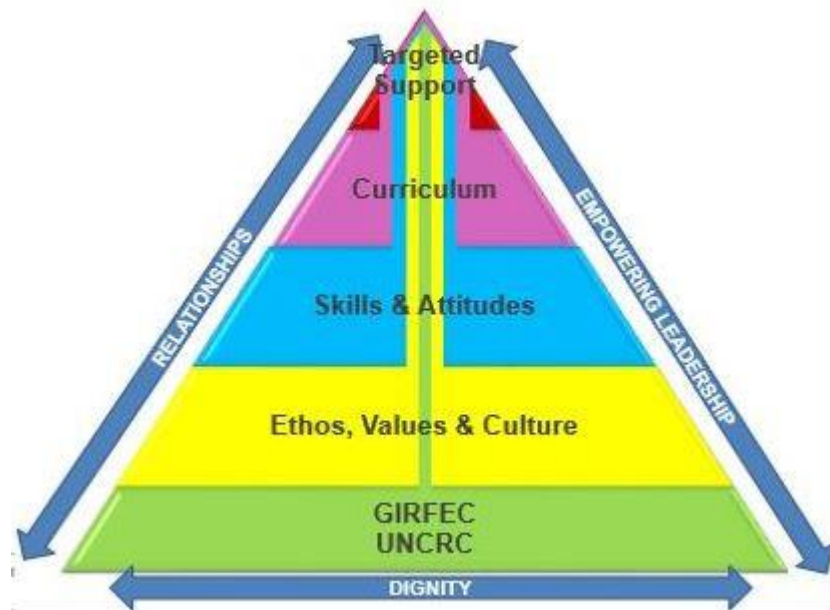
A rights based approach seeks to ensure that the dignity, respect and basic requirements for development of children are all protected and promoted.

It is about placing the UNCRC at the heart of planning and service delivery and integrating children and young people's rights into every aspect of decision making, policy and practice

State of Children's Rights Report, 2017

This is so much more than simply realising children's right to education – it involves everyone across a whole education community fully understanding and realising children's rights by building positive relationships, being flexible in response to individual need, ensuring children have opportunities to participate in decision making, keeping children safe, promoting good

health (emotional and physical) and embedding equity over equality. A rights based approach permeates every aspect of a school or ECC community.



Children are not the people of tomorrow, but are people of today. They have a right to be taken seriously, and to be treated with tenderness and respect. They should be allowed to grow into whoever they were meant to be. 'The unknown person' inside of them is our hope for the future.

Janusz Korczak

Relationships – what do we mean by this?

As can be seen from the above, relationships permeate a RightPrincs Based approach. This is because children grow and develop in the context of safe, attuned relationships. It is these very relationships that help children buffer stress and promote their social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.

Children only learn to self-regulate, that is keep their thoughts, emotions and behaviours in balance, when they have experienced attuned co-regulation from a reliable adult. Good education, that is set at the appropriate level for the child should create a small amount of stress, this is necessary for a child to be in their 'zone of proximal development'. As such, children will vary in their vulnerability or resilience to stress and will require varying levels of co-regulation from adults to help them learn. When we are out of balance or stressed, we can become dysregulated.

It thus follows that a relational approach is exemplified by attuned practitioners who embody equity within the classrooms, being flexible in response to individual need both where an undesirable behaviour occurs and when an academic challenge occurs. Practitioners will have open and engaged facial expressions, tone of voice and body language and will differentiate their response depending on a child's need.

Relational practitioners embody both high warmth and high expectations, and are highly attuned to the children in their class. They get to know the children as individuals. They create safe, engaging and structured learning environments. Children feel safest and learn best when they can predict what will happen in their learning environment and have confidence that the adults can keep everyone emotionally and physically safe. Relational practitioners are not permissive but authoritative in their approach.

A relational approach also includes relationships that the adults in a school community have with each other, how they are led, managed and supported to remain regulated and emotionally well to meet the needs of the children within their school community.

Inclusion

The 1994 UNESCO Salamanca Statement on Inclusive Education states:

*'... inclusion and participation are essential to human dignity and to the enjoyment and exercise of human rights.' In the field of education this is reflected in bringing about a **'genuine equalisation of opportunity.'** Special needs education incorporates proven methods of teaching from which all children can benefit; **it assumes human differences are normal and that learning must be adapted to the needs of the child, rather than the child fitted to the process.** The fundamental principle of the inclusive school, it adds, is that all children should learn together, where possible, and that ordinary schools must **recognise and respond to the diverse needs of their students**, while also having a **continuum of support and services to match these needs.** Inclusive schools are the 'most effective' at building solidarity between children with special needs and their peers.*

The ASN Review has recently concluded and makes a number of key recommendations with regards to inclusive practice [additional-support-for-learning-review](#) and the current challenges schools, children and families are experiencing in this regard. The review of the Presumption of Mainstream is anticipated to report soon and will also have further recommendation for us at a local and national level. Clearly, inclusive practice is well aligned with a rights based approach.

What is Wellbeing?

A rights based approach promotes children's wellbeing by ensuring that adults create the right kinds of relationships, experiences, environments and communities that children need to thrive. When adults tune in to the individual needs of children we increase the likelihood of delivering equitable education. So what does wellbeing look like in practice? The following definition comes from Education Scotland's Connected Compassionate Communities resource, and has been adopted as our working definition for the Wellbeing Renewal Workstream for Education in East Ayrshire.

The concept of wellbeing comprises two main elements: feeling good and functioning well. Feelings of happiness, contentment, enjoyment, curiosity and engagement...equally important...experiencing positive relationships, having some control over one's life and having a sense of purpose are all important attributes of wellbeing.

Huppert, 2008

1. Feeling Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults and children feel good to have a purpose, a sense of belonging to their school or ECC, to peers and feel supported well enough to feel good about learning
2. Functioning Well
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The safety, emotional and physical that is offered to families and practitioners, allows children and adults to feel safe, confident and function well
3. Happiness, contentment, curiosity and engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children, teachers and all adult practitioners in the school or ECC have moments of joy, fun and curiosity across their day
4. Positive Relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults and children feel a sense of belonging to their schools or ECC. Adults have high expectations, are warm in their approach and offer support to children as required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families feel understood and feel that the school understands them and supports their child's development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults feel comfortable and are effective at intervening in any behavioural difficulties within the school or ECC community
5. Having some control over our lives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practitioners, within a structure, have autonomy within the class of how they deliver the curriculum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children have a degree of developmentally appropriate autonomy and choice in their learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children participate actively in the school or ECC community and are actively involved in decision making that may affect them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Their views are regularly sought and acted upon appropriately
6. Having a sense of purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children come to school to learn, to play and to socialise, to belong. Teachers come to teach, to see children learn and progress, and to be a part of a community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring a shared understanding of the purpose of the school or ECC community is embedded within the culture, values and ethos
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring both of the above happen, gives everyone a sense of purpose which in turn creates a sense of safety.

In order that our children, practitioners and organisations are resilient in the face of stress, and our children and our practitioners both experience wellbeing as outlined above, we require to ensure that our reaction to adversity becomes one of resilience and not of trauma. We propose to promote wellbeing by focussing on the framework below:



EAC Education Wellbeing Renewal Framework 2020

As can be seen from the above, stress should reduce by increasing **Safety, Structure and Support**. We cannot eliminate stress within the educational setting – working with children and young people is inherently stressful and being with a large group of children all day can be stressful for children too, some more than others. However, we can take action as an organisation, as a school or ECC, and as individuals to create systems, structures and a way of being that can ensure that stress becomes manageable and adaptive, and does not become overwhelming.

The wellbeing of a school or ECC community starts with the wellbeing of the adults. It is of crucial importance that we feel supported and well enough to be in our place of work. Please see our [Practitioner Wellbeing Guidance](#).

For children and young people, how we offer them safety through attuned relationships and support, structure and manageable doses of stress, will ensure that they develop, or further develop, resilience within education, and can benefit from the curricular content we offer them. By doing this we calm their nervous system, instead of their nervous systems seeking safety, soothing or recognition to the detriment of cognitive learning and teaching. To be clear, we still require to offer our children and young people excellent learning experiences, but they will not be able to profit from them unless we create emotional safety through how we structure our day, their learning and support and safety through relationships. In this way we reduce stress, promote wellbeing and increase the likelihood of cognitive engagement with the curriculum. **Structure, Safety and relational Support** regulate our nervous systems. **When we are regulated we are more able to learn.**

As Beacon House show in the image below, some of our children will be nervous or scared about the return. For others they will see school as their safe place. For some children as they

readjust we may see this dysregulation in ‘freezing’, zoning out, lethargy, daydreaming, or non-attendance. Conversely we might see children coping by being defiant, argumentative, walking out, wandering around, running away: ‘fight/flight’ responses. For some of our children we will have to ‘repair’ our relationships with them. Through no fault of our own, some children may feel let down by school and key staff not being available, and may need support to trust and re-engage. They will require gentle, attuned, relational support to rebuild trust.

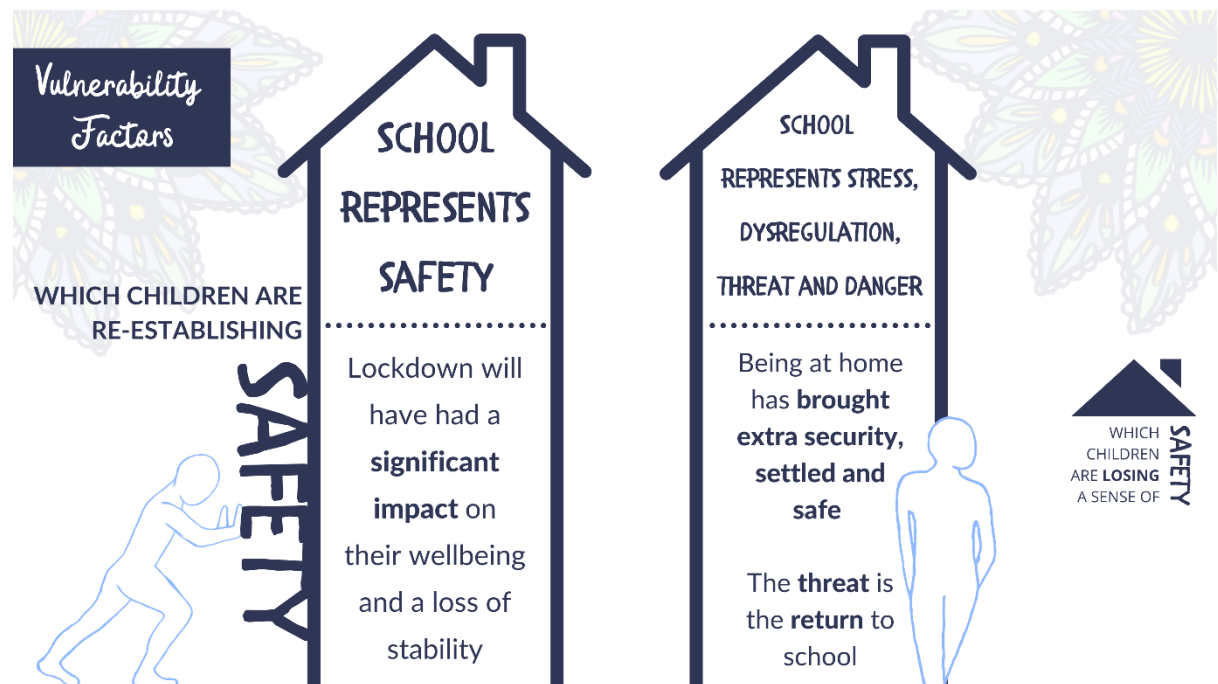


Image courtesy of Beacon House Therapeutic Services & Trauma Team | 2021 | www.beaconhouse.org.uk

As adults we are being asked to deliver education in a constantly evolving landscape which, for most humans, causes anxiety. Our children need us to be regulated and project an air of confidence, calm and fun. To be able to do this we need to feel supported, connected to our colleagues, work within a structure that helps us feel a sense of control, and have time and space outwith our place of work to have experiences that help our nervous system feel in balance, not overwhelmed, anxious or in a fight-flight-freeze response ourselves. Please see our [Practitioner Wellbeing Guidance](#)

Stress, Support and Structure

Perry (2020) begins to explain stress to us like this:

Stress is merely a demand on one or more of our body's many physiological systems; hunger, thirst, cold, working out, a big project at work – are all stressors. Our body has a host of 'stress-response' capabilities that help us manage these challenges and keep us in 'equilibrium.' Stress is essential to healthy

development, and it is the essential element of building resilience. The key factor in determining whether stress is positive or destructive is the pattern of stress.

When stress is predictable, in moderate doses and controllable in the context of relationships that we find safe, we develop resilience. When stress is unpredictable, extreme or prolonged we can become vulnerable to it and our brain's become more sensitised to stress. In this way, some of our children are more

vulnerable to the impact of the current COVID-19 epidemic than others, particularly in relation to the pattern of stress within their specific family and community. As we return, these are the children who may over-react to what appears to the adult to be a straightforward request. It is also, it follows, imperative that we structure our learning environments and our learning and teaching in a predictable, systematic, relational way to ensure the stress is just the right amount for our children and young people to lead to optimum learning and wellbeing.



School Connectedness (from Bergin and Bergin, 2009)

To feel securely connected to others is a basic human need (Baumeister and Leary 1995). Ideally, this need is met at school/ECC as well as at home. 'School bonding' refers to a sense of belonging at school or ECC and having a network of relationships with peers and teachers. A child who is bonded to school has a sense that people at school/ECC like me. The positive effects of school bonding may be strongest in high poverty schools and for high-risk youth (Osterman 2000; Resnick et al. 1997). This connection begins with key adults and key peers.

Social Buffering – Resilience through Relationships

The connectedness that schools offer is delivered through relationships. These relationships work because they offer social buffering, so what is it? Social buffering occurs when the presence (actual or symbolic) of someone we trust, who responds to us in an attuned way, literally impacts on how our nervous system responds to stress. We also call this **co-regulation**. For example, a child may respond better to undertaking an area of the curriculum they find difficult if they have a strong relationship with their class teacher or a classroom assistant whose presence reduces their stress.

Social buffering is also seen when children are in the presence of best friends. In this way facilitating social interaction between children may also be protective in current circumstances. Steven Porges explains the impact of less social buffering in the context of COVID-19 here: [Youtube Steven Porges](#)

He says...

As our relationships move further away from the cues of safety — the sound of a soothing voice or the sight of an expressive, expansive face — we're less secure. It happens physiologically...We also need to find more opportunities to exercise the social engagement system's neural circuits by using warm, inviting facial expressions; by producing and listening to melodic voices like a mother's lullaby; and by seeking direct face-to-face interactions in real time through collaborative play, dancing, or other activities.

By ensuring our children know that we can offer them this attuned interaction, we increase their senses of safety around us. By promoting this across whole group, class and school or ECC groups, we increase children's ability to offer each other this connection promote their wellbeing.

The ability of an adult to offer emotional safety to a child is directly proportionate to the amount of time they have spent with the child (Perry 2020). This is often why children who have experienced a high level of stress in their lives do not respond well to staff they do not know. Children at risk of, or already, vulnerable to stress will require more frequent and more regular 'doses' of connection. After such a long period away from education, some children and young people may well need 'more' of the adults in school to allow them to benefit from the relationship offered and to be able to accept limits. Proactively planning for this will make the child or young person feel safer and reduce the likelihood of uncooperative and unsafe behaviours in the education setting.

All children benefit from having a number of people in a school or ECC environment that they know well but our most complex children and young people need a 'therapeutic web' of a number of adults that they can trust. We need to be mindful of balancing physical risk of infection, with the emotional risk of adults experiencing vicarious trauma or compassion fatigue from being the key person for a child who experiences high levels of dysregulation within the education setting. In such circumstances a small team of key staff supporting the child is preferred to support the child and adults' wellbeing rather than only one key person. Each establishment should discuss such individual needs with their Educational Psychologist.

Safety, Structure and Support through Relationships

Our biggest asset as we transition back is our relational approach to get to know, to enjoy and to soothe the children in our care, while offering them structure, challenge and limits as they require them. Our children will get a sense of wellbeing from being in school if

- The adults are welcoming, open and engaged in their faces and body language
- Being EXTRA mindful of this if we are wearing a visor or a mask.
- Ensure our voices are expressive and engaging. We often talk of the benefits of an engaging and expressive 'storytelling voice' to help calm and engage children.
 - Children who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences such as neglect or abuse also can struggle to make sense of our facial expressions, as can some children with an Autism Spectrum condition. As such it's doubly important to be expressive, open and engaged as it thus benefits our most vulnerable children the most.
- The adults tune in and sensitively notice if a child is 'not themselves'
- School values of belonging, community and both caring for and respecting one another are explicitly taught, reinforced and modelled (this is particularly important before introducing new routines, hygiene and physical distancing)
- We explicitly teach new routines and structures. Explaining the why and discussing questions with children.
- This includes what do if something goes wrong – we are all human, children might stand too close to an adult, go the wrong way round a one-way system, forget to cough into their elbow
- We teach these pro-social behaviours to the children and young people
- We encourage children to support each other, thus deepening peer relationships and increasing opportunities for social buffering and pro social behaviours
- We use gentle reminders instead of directives re COVID-19 related new approaches, including visual supports where helpful. Simply smiling, saying a child's name and pointing to a visual on the wall can sometimes be enough to remind a child, thus avoiding conflict or the need for a public reprimand
- Adults can acknowledge that they might feel unsure or nervous, but they might also feel absolutely fine and be excited to be back. All feelings about the return are ok. Letting children know this and that the adults are happy to listen to their concerns is important.
- Please see the following for practical advice on acknowledging children and young people's anxieties: Education: Wellbeing Renewal Guidance for Parents and Carers on Supporting Children's Wellbeing [Supporting-wellbeing-for-children-guidance](#)

Rituals and Coming Together – Structures Reducing Stress

Schools are rich with rituals such as check ins, check outs, over and above awards, assemblies, marking events such as Harvest or Halloween. We often come together to watch performances

in sports or the arts, or to sing as one. We may have key school or class sayings, or songs that we sing at specific points. We may turn down the lighting when it's time to listen or tidy up. Human beings have a long history of rituals. They give us a sense of control and togetherness.

'Rituals allow you to create a pathway to connect your mind and body and feel in control during a time where there are a lot of unknown.'

Silby (2020).

Rituals can also help us regulate our emotions. We can help our children feel grounded when we have moments of mindfully colouring, or listening to a piece of music before we begin a task, singing together as we transition from literacy to numeracy for example. These things all help children feel calm and regulated. If, for example, lunchtime routines are changing, can we create rituals around these that promote wellbeing? There is a wealth of literature that shows the benefits of families eating together, for example in strengthening relationships between family members and in increasing a sense of identity and core values. Undertaking group, and class rituals together creates a sense of belonging and community. Building the same types of activities into each lesson or day, creates predictability and structure, reducing stress and promoting wellbeing. Currently larger groups are not possible, but it will be important to think of smaller group ways of maintaining these routines, especially as whole school coming together events will not be happening, at least not in the same ways as before.

As well as promoting wellbeing through connection, this sense of community is the greatest factor in helping children and young people to comply with protecting each other and the adults in the school from spreading Coronavirus. Feeling valued, included and liked by the adults in schools is the factor we can most easily influence in the face of helping all members of the educational community to adhere to new routines safely and respectfully.

You may find this article of interest:

[parenting/rituals-pandemic](#)

Views of our Children and Young People

During the COVID-19 lockdown, many children and young people across East Ayrshire and the rest of Scotland responded to surveys about their experiences, and their thoughts about the future. We have looked at this data to inform how we can best support children and young people as education establishments begin to reopen. It is worth bearing the feedback below in mind in considering how best to meet the needs of our children and young people.

When asked about wellbeing in relation to COVID-19 and lockdown, only 31% of the East Ayrshire children and young people who responded reported that they were "extremely or moderately concerned" about their own physical wellbeing. However, over 50% were "extremely or moderately concerned" about others' physical wellbeing, the mental wellbeing of themselves and others, and the impact on their future. For all of the above measures, a

higher percentage of children and young people reported concern in East Ayrshire than nationally.

The Lockdown Lowdown survey conducted by Young Scot found that 93% of East Ayrshire children and young people felt that they were able to access information, advice and updates around lockdown. However, as the children and young people struggling to access this information may also be less likely to have accessed the survey itself in order to report this, we should also be aware that this figure may not be fully representative. 45% of the East Ayrshire children and young people who responded reported they were least confident in accessing information relating to mental health and wellbeing support. This highlights a need to increase awareness of how children and young people can seek support, and is something we will continue to emphasise ahead.

With regard to other measures, over 50% of East Ayrshire respondents reported they were "extremely or moderately concerned" about school, college or university closures, and exams and coursework. 43% were "moderately or somewhat concerned" about employment, and 32% about their financial situation. Again, for all of these measures, a higher percentage of children in East Ayrshire reported concern than nationally.

In East Ayrshire, 45% of respondents felt information should be provided by teachers, and 24% felt it should be provided by youth workers. Going forward, it will be crucial to investigate the best ways of sharing information with children and young people to ensure they feel both safe and well-informed.

East Ayrshire Council also conducted a survey of children and young people's experiences of education at this time, and their thoughts on renewal. 63% of responses were from children in primary school, 37% from young people in secondary school, and <1% from children and young people in specialist provision.

When asked to rate from 1-5 (where 1 is not at all satisfied and 5 is extremely satisfied) how well schools had supported wellbeing and learning at home, the overall average response was 3.7. On the same scale, an overall average rating of 3.8 was given for how satisfied pupils were with the communication from their schools.

When asked how well they felt they had engaged with learning at home overall, 32% of respondents felt they did not experience any barriers to learning at home. However, 39% reported the greatest barrier as parents/carers working whilst also trying to support them. The second greatest barrier, reported by 19% of respondents, was access to IT.

Pupils were asked their preferred method of home learning, with the majority (54%) favouring tasks which were set online, but which could be completed either online or offline. This was followed by 29% favouring tasks with no online component at all, rather learning packs which are sent home for completion. Though 17% of pupils favoured online only tasks, it is clear that there is a strong preference amongst East Ayrshire pupils for models of home learning which do not rely heavily on IT.

Curricular Approaches and Structure

While it is crucially important to ensure that we continue to deliver our curricular approaches to wellbeing, such as PATHS, Emotion Works, and Relationships and Sexual Health programmes, we should not become overly reliant on HWB curricular content, but more how we create a class, a play room and a school that has a sense of relational safety, structure and support. This is the foundation to all of our wellbeing practice.

We should continue to gently and sensitively deliver curriculum content, but bearing in mind that children take longer than before to internalise this information, and they may need more repetition in lots of different ways to make it stick. It may also be helpful to use topics that lend themselves to health and wellbeing across the curriculum, such as texts in English and topics in Science and Social Subjects.

Children need a variety of experiences across the day to help them feel emotionally and physically well. Thinking as an establishment, or as an individual practitioner, are we creating learning experiences that meet the needs above across our day and week? This article is about applying this to the home environment but it is equally applicable to how we **structure** the education environment.

[Using-a-brain-based-approach-to-maintaining-balance-while-social-distancing](#)

The HWB Renewal Frameworks [Renewal Frameworks](#) (click to access) have been produced for each level in response to the current Coronavirus context, however the resources and lessons can be used at any time.

In this framework there is a focus on 4 key renewal themes:

1. **Relationships**
2. **Mental, social, emotional and physical well-being (MESP)**
3. **Change and loss**
4. **Internet safety.**

The activities/resources which link specifically to issues around Covid 19 and lockdown are highlighted yellow.

[The EAC HWB Progression Frameworks](#) for all levels, which cover the 6 HWB organisers are also available via GLOW.

While physical education may, given current scientific guidelines, have to be delivered differently, it is a crucial part of our children's physical and emotional wellbeing and we must ensure that our children remain active. This also aids their concentration. Approaches such as the Daily Mile, outdoor learning and music and movement for short bursts across the school or ECC day will be imperative. While we are often good at implementing calm 'down-regulating' activities such as mindfulness, breathing exercises and yoga across the day we are perhaps less familiar with 'up regulating' activities' such as short music and movement breaks throughout the day. Research now shows us that children benefit from regular 'doses' of regulation across

the school day. How we **structure** these into our learning and teaching will support Health and Wellbeing.

In addition, we may require over time to begin to deliver targeted interventions such as Nurture classes and group support for children and young people who are experiencing significant levels of anxiety.

Creating Safety: Do we talk about COVID-19 or not?

Spending time with children to talk about COVID-19, establishing the facts, children's experiences, addressing any anxieties will be helpful. Care should be taken to ensure that this occurs in a **structured**, planned manner, and is coordinated to ensure it is not given undue focus across a number of subject classes in the secondary sector. However, we do need to be explicit about why things are different. It will be helpful to think about the benefits of new routines, to ensure children are not being worried by misinformation, and create an environment where children can make us aware of questions or worries they may have in a variety of ways, directly or indirectly and know how to do so. E.g. email to Guidance teacher or worry box in class etc. One of the most helpful things that adults in schools and ECCs can do is project an air of quiet confidence: we've got this, we're in this together, we'll try our best to answer any questions or worries you might have.

Allowing time for children to talk, to tell their stories of what life has been like for them will be important. Establishments will want to consider how best to provide that time and acknowledgement with young people, some may need more of this than others. In addition it is important to remember the children and young people who have been shielding throughout this period, who may benefit from having a trusted adult check in with them on their current feelings of safety as well as understanding their experiences of the last few months.

Covid-19 related activities for use with groups or classes have been added to the [HWB Renewal Frameworks](#). You can access them through this link and they are located on Glow.

Giving Comfort


Many staff, parents and children have asked questions about not being able, or not, to closely comfort a child who is in distress. In such a situation it is up to the practitioner involved as to how comfortable they are giving this comfort in close physical proximity to a child. This is clearly a very individual decision. Should being close to the child not be possible, it may be helpful to think about the following particularly for younger children or those who have typically been regulated through adult proximity:

1. Seeking a peer who the child and their friend are comfortable having a hug from
2. Being able to get down to the child's level, even if a distance away
 - Increase non-physical connection.

- Explicitly teach children air hugs, self-hugs, air high-5s, silent cheers etc. for when it is not possible for an adult to offer them the physical connection they are used to
- Using soothing tone and facial expression. This is extremely important and will likely need to be more exaggerated than usual given the lack of physical closeness (see above *Safety, Structure and Support through Relationships*)
- Mirror child's body language to show attunement
- Repeat back gently what they have told you to show them that you have heard them
- This will be more pertinent for children who are developmentally or emotionally younger than their chronological age.
- Tell the child you wish you could give them a hug and give an 'air hug'
- Have clean blankets or throws that the child can wrap around themselves
- Depending on the child's needs or severity of their distress, ensure proactive check ins
- Proactively discuss comfort with the children – help them work out what they would find helpful and have a 'plan' they have developed should the occasion arise
- Consider things like having a quiet corner of the classroom set up, music available if that would help, calming fidget toys or calming visuals to look at
- In the secondary sector consider having a designated quiet and relatively private area for children to go to if they are worried or upset, again with calming activities available and an adult available.

Behaviour Support – Relational Practice and being Curious about Behaviour

It is understandable that there will be concerns that children may not always adhere to the routines and structures we put in place around preventing the spread of Coronavirus, particularly given the potential impact of not following these rules. It is also important for us to remember that children are error prone, developing in their capacity to self-regulate and highly responsive to their environment and the social context. This is why we use our Nurture Principle – All Behaviour is Understood Developmentally. Teenagers for example, are likely to be more impulsive in that they are aware of consequences but their brain's can prioritise social gains over the 'consequence.' Younger children, for example, can be much more impulsive and not think before they act. In this way children who are socially and emotionally younger need to be supported in a way that we might a younger aged child.

	<i>Behaviour Models</i>		
	Punitive/ Rule-based	Behaviourist/ Consequence-based	Relational/ Developmental
<i>Main means of behaviour management</i>	Fear	Consequences	Relationship
<i>Children & young people are</i>	responsible for their actions	learning	developing, error-prone & highly responsive to environment
<i>Boundaries are to</i>	indicate right and wrong	make standards clear	try to meet everyone's needs
<i>Rules should be</i>	enforced without exception	clearly communicated	developed together and adapted where needed
<i>Behaviour is something to</i>	control	manage	interpret
<i>Consequences are</i>	sanctions & punishments	ways to shape behaviour	a last resort, only used within a process of rupture & repair
<i>"Inappropriate" behaviour is</i>	wrong-doing, deliberate	learned, not necessarily voluntary	a sign either of an unmet need, difficulty coping, or lack of knowledge
<i>The causes of difficulties are</i>	lack of compliance, insufficient discipline	learned poor responses, lack of appropriate reinforcement	mostly in the environment, felt relationships or developmentally appropriate
<i>Solutions lie in</i>	the child	adjusting consequences	understanding what the behaviour tells us about the child & their needs
<i>Children who don't manage should be</i>	excluded or fixed	helped and given intervention	understood & included
<i>Policy effectiveness is measured by</i>	compliance	behaviour change	well-being

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Image courtesy of James McTaggart.

Research, including BISSR (Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research), has consistently shown that the best determinant of children's behaviour in school is the establishment's culture, values and ethos. As such, as outlined above, a culture of mutual respect, of calm, structured, predictable learning environments, where expectations are modelled and explicitly taught, where adults model a relational approach with high expectations and high warmth (as evidenced through non-verbal behaviour, tone of voice, open and engaged facial expressions and positive language), where children feel they belong both to peers and to the school itself, will all help proactively prevent issues from arising.

However should non-compliance to critical routines arise, what might we do?

Discipline means 'to teach', therefore when we intervene when a child or young person is not following the agreed approach, we need to do so in a way that does not punish, but leads to the highest likelihood that the behaviour will not occur again. Reducing this likelihood is our primary goal.

A child may be scared into stopping the behaviour in the moment but it is unlikely to lead to them being able to repeatedly stop it over the long term, particularly for the children who struggle the most to be regulated in the school or ECC environment. For these children, such an approach is likely to lead to further dysregulation and an escalation in how they respond to the adult.

Thinking of our children as people within their own right who are unique, are developing, error prone and highly responsive to the environment means that we can't have a one fit response to how we responds to a child exhibiting an undesirable behaviour.

As above, a relational approach that offers high warmth and support and high expectations benefits children most. Maintaining this 'way of being' in discipline moments is helpful rather than an overly stern or panicked approach.

Daniel Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson have developed the following approaches to help co-regulate and not simply 'manage' a child's behaviour. Often when we manage a behaviour we have to keep managing it. When we take a relational approach that is biologically respectful to how children's brain's learn we help them learn and be more able to self-regulate. They say

'effective discipline means that we're not only stopping a bad behaviour or promoting a good one, but also teaching skills and nurturing the connections in our children's brains that will help them make better decisions and handle themselves better in the future'

Our aim is to keep the child in their 'window of tolerance'. That is to help them learn from the situation without them becoming dysregulated, leading to them feeling ashamed or fearful where they move into a fight, flight or freeze response that becomes much harder to manage and co-regulate. While this video focusses on children who have experienced developmental trauma, we all have our own window of tolerance and it's helpful to think about this concept to ensure we are regulated in the school or ECC environment and we do our best to help children stay in theirs. [Video link](#)

Keeping children in their window of tolerance means being a safe adult to them. If we can maintain our relationship with a child while we redirect their behaviour we increase the chance of reducing the likelihood of the behaviour occurring again.

So how do we promote a child's cooperation when they make an error in following COVID-19 specific, or any, approaches?

'We say no to the behaviour, but yes to the child'

Bryson and Siegel coined this phrase to in their book No Drama Discipline to summarise the following

'Connection means that we give our kids our attention, that we respect them enough to listen to them, that we value their contribution to problem solving, and that we communicate to them that we are on their side, whether we like the way they are acting or not.'

However, they go on to state the connection is not the same as permissiveness. When we are permissive in schools we see low level disruption increase. We still need to offer clear and consistent boundaries, create predictable **structure** and have high expectations. The absence of this creates stress, which pushes children out of their window of tolerance. Different children will need different ‘doses’ of relational **support** to their brain’s connect the learning dots, in the same way children need different numbers of learning trials to consolidate any other aspect of learning.

They summarise this by saying

‘Deep empathic connection can and should be combined with clear and firm boundaries that create needed structure in children’s lives.’

In this way we connect relationally with the child before we redirect their behaviour. We call this **Connect and Redirect**.

Connect and Redirect

1. The first step in this is pausing to consider – why did this child react in this way at this time? This is the foundation of being curious about behaviour, it’s our Nurture Principle – All Behaviour is Communication.
2. What do I need to teach right now?
3. How do I best teach this lesson? What do they need from me?

Some Examples:

Connect and Redirect – 3 Questions to frame adult thinking	
1. The first step in this is pausing to consider – why did this child react in this way at this time? This is the foundation of being curious about behaviour, it’s our Nurture Principle – All Behaviour is Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She keeps coming within 2 metres of me. Does she just keep forgetting? Is she looking for me to recognise her work? Each time she finishes she bounces out of her seat, despite the new rules and comes straight up to me. Is she a worrier and needs more of me?
2. What do I need to teach right now?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To remain seated, or at least 2 metres away
3. How do I best teach this lesson? What do they need from me?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with her good intentions, redirect the behaviour
Connect	Redirect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarah, it’s just lovely that you are so keen to show me your work. I can see how much you’d like to be up close. That’s what we are used to in school isn’t it? It’s all a bit strange now. I miss the old ways too. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember to stay in your seat. You can put your hand up to let me know you’ve finished. I am always happy to see your work. Thank you

Connect and Redirect – 3 Questions to frame adult thinking	
4. The first step in this is pausing to consider – why did this child react in this way at this time? This is the foundation of being curious about behaviour, it's our Nurture Principle – All Behaviour is Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connor keeps coughing
5. What do I need to teach right now?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To cough into his elbow
6. How do I best teach this lesson? What do they need from me?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with him, redirect the behaviour. Not make him feel silly or ashamed in front of his peers
Connect	Redirect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connor, bless you! Oops a daisy! (smile) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember when we sneeze, we sneeze into our elbow or our hanky (points to the visual reminder on classroom wall). This way we keep our germs to ourselves. Let's get the spray and you can give it a wipe and then we can get back on task. Thank you. (once cleaning up) You are so responsible cleaning up and thinking about everyone in your class. Thanks!

Some children will need more learning trials to internalise new learning. Thus, they may need a reminder before each transition. This is helpful to do with the whole group or class and some children may need an individual reminder by name. For example, children with an Autism Spectrum Condition may not always be aware that a whole class or group instruction also includes them. Therefore as far as possible saying their name and giving an individual instruction may be helpful. As may having a visual prompt or written reminder too.

This is only one strategy to implement, ongoing CLPL, specific to your the needs of the children in your school or ECC will be made available.

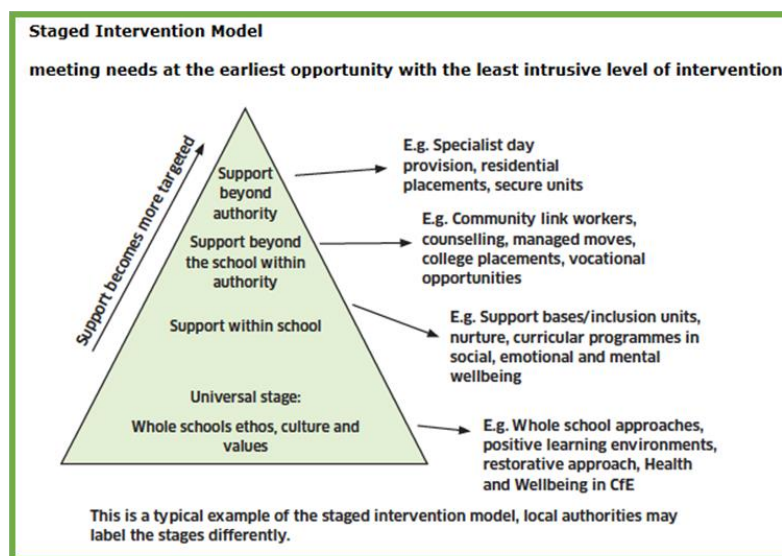
Responsive to Individual Need

Where a child or young person is frequently dysregulated or engaging in risky behaviours, in the context of prevention of spreading the novel Coronavirus or, more generally, this will require an assessment of wellbeing. Speak to your school ASN coordinator or pastoral support link in a secondary setting. They should begin the assessment process and consult with the school Educational Psychologist, and other specialist staff such as EAST colleagues, to collaboratively undertake an assessment of wellbeing, formulate a Child's Plan and undertake

any risk assessment or Safety Plan as required. For some of our children who struggle to accept support and co-regulation from key adults in school, there may be particular challenges which need to be carefully considered and planned for. Children who have experienced trauma or who are struggling to cope with transition back to school, whatever the reason, will require targeted additional support or changes to previous support given.

This will be a very small number of our learner population. However, moving timeously and sensibly to seek advice and guidance around how best to intervene will best support the child, their peers and the adults in the school or ECC.

Staged Intervention and Whole School Approaches



In all of our educational establishments, there are clear procedures and structures to support children and staff when significant incidents occur, however, these may need to be modified in light of the current situation. For example, a child in a heightened state who is not able to follow an instruction to go to a designated safe space/able to socially distance.

- Are our current whole school systems effective for all of our children?
- If not, what needs to change?
- What do we need to do to reduce the risk of significant behavioural incidents?
- How do we develop a system which is effective when a significant incident occurs?
- Is the system understood and enacted by everyone?
- Does it work? If not, what needs to change?
- Who is leading and tracking the effectiveness of this system?

Staff

Children requiring a high level of targeted support, although in the minority, are at particular risk of their wellbeing being adversely affected. The wellbeing of staff supporting children will also need to be carefully considered and planned for. It may be beneficial when planning to

include wellbeing of both children and staff in risk assessments, depending on the needs of individual children and the staff supporting them. It is important to mitigate risk and increase protective factors for all staff to ensure their wellbeing is supported.

- Do we have a clear system in place, understood and enacted by everyone to support staff wellbeing?
- Does the system meet our needs as a school and as a staff team?
- Does the system work in practice? If not, what needs to change?
- For example system might include: tapping in and out of classes for staff; direct support from school leaders; stage partners; critical friends; how are we building in time for staff to ensure what we say will happen does happen?
- Who is leading and tracking the effectiveness of this system?

Class

For most children, return to school will mean a return to everyday life, opportunities to have fun and meet with peers, and they will benefit from the structure, safety and security which school offers. However, it is also important to consider how all children may feel if a peer exhibits big behaviours in class. Children who might usually be resilient to incidents within class, or the wider school setting may find themselves more easily upset, frightened or angry; everyone can experience feelings of vulnerability at any time, but these feelings may be heightened due to experiences of lockdown and the transition back to the school setting.

Teachers and support staff will have well established daily classroom routines and rituals to ensure feelings of safety and security are maximised for all children. These routines will already give children opportunities to discuss their feelings and contribute to the daily structure of the classroom. It may be helpful to think about any changes needed to mitigate additional feelings of vulnerability for all children; established systems within classes may already be enough.

Child

Children who exhibit these types of behaviours will benefit from increased structure and supervision, and systemic planning to ensure safety of all staff and pupils. In these circumstances, individual plans and risk assessments should be developed with the child and their family/carers to ensure everyone has a clear understanding of systems in place should any incidents occur.

When a child's stress response has been activated they can become stuck and may not be able to use more traditional behavioural strategies, follow instructions or access the thinking part

of their brain. This can cause children to go into a flight, fight, freeze response which can quickly escalate into a challenging situation for everyone involved.

Children will benefit from explicit teaching of helpful ways – regulators – to help manage their stress; these will be different depending on the individual child. For example, one child may feel calmed and be able to use deep breathing techniques; another child may prefer to run or do some physical exercise. Children will also need to practice using techniques to help themselves feel calm. The impact of which will be most effective when children are taught during calm periods, for example, during Nurture classes.

Despite our best efforts to prevent unwanted behaviours; significant incidents may still occur. It will be helpful for the team around the child to consider the following:

- Does the Child's Plan need to be updated to include safety planning and risk assessment?
- Has the child been involved in developing the plan, have ownership of their plan and feels it is helpful, achievable?
- Do the wider family/carers, multi-agency team understand and are able to enact the Child's Plan?
- Is the Child's Plan effective? If not, why not? What needs to change?
- Is there a clear procedure laid out within the Child's Plan which is actioned if a significant incident occurs?
- Does the Child's Plan include safety planning and risk assessment?
- Does the procedure include what will happen after a significant incident to ensure wellbeing of all is supported?

Big Behaviours – Being Proactive

We create a wealth of data in a school setting. It is helpful for us to use it to help inform our practice. For example, we log instances of children fighting on SEEMIS. If we look at this we will be able to see where the majority of these incidents occur – usually during unstructured social times in common areas. As such, increasing the structure, reducing the numbers of children able to congregate, being mindful of group dynamics and where possible increasing adult supervision may help mitigate, but not eradicate some of this risk – as we said before children and teenagers are error prone, developing and highly responsive to their environment. It would also be sensible to ensure that where adults are in situations where they may be exposed to greater risk, such as intervening when children are fighting, they would be best advised to be wearing a degree of PPE to reduce the risk of close contact.

Where behaviours may pose a health risk to others, such as a repeated pattern of spitting or trying to scratch or climb on staff, and have not responded over repeated attempts to connect and direct, as outlined above, guidance can be sought from the establishment Educational Psychologist via the Senior Leadership link person, and an assessment of wellbeing undertaken.

Seeking early support with such scenarios is welcomed in the current context. It may also be helpful to have informal peer support sessions for staff to get together, with a member of the SLT to collaborate and support each other where there is a particular tricky situation for a child.

Understanding Children's Needs in the Current Context

Psychological Services will be delivering a range of online modular CLPL available to adults working in school and ECC settings. This will include understanding children's needs as well as conversations that build connection and aid positive behaviour management; an introduction to supporting children who have experienced developmental trauma; assessing their needs; staff wellbeing; approaches such as Dyadic Developmental Practice, Nurture and the Neurosequential Model in Education. Further support will be provided by Psychological Services on an establishment basis. The HWB Team will also be delivering a range of related CLPL as detailed on GLOW.

Should you have any questions or concerns after reading this guidance please make you Head Teacher/Head of Centre aware, who can feedback to the Wellbeing Renewal Group for the offer of further support or advice.