

## Health and wellbeing at the heart of transitions<sup>1</sup>

Children and young people have already negotiated one of the most unexpected and unprepared changes in their lives when they had to adapt to the changes arising from the pandemic. They will have received varying levels of support to make sense of these changes and to cope with the accompanying stressors. This variation in support will have impacted on their ability to cope. Therefore this document gives recommendations to how schools and practitioners can support stressors that children and young people have experienced, with the green boxes providing quick takeaway messages.

While acknowledging that some learners will be particularly vulnerable, all learners will benefit from support to process what has happened and readjust to their school or early learning and childcare setting (ELC).

### Relationships

Our education policies emphasise that relationships are at the heart of development and learning. Positive relationships flourish where children and young people feel included, respected, safe and secure and where their contributions are valued.

Attempts to continue connection with our learners during the period of learning at home will influence the rebuilding of relationships when children and young people return to their school or ELC setting. Supporting the re-establishment of peer to peer relationships will be important.

### Climate and Ethos

We are aware that the climate and ethos of a learning community are key factors in promoting social and emotional wellbeing. One key aspect of climate is helping the school or ELC community to feel safe.

Transition plans need us to engage with learners, staff and parents to explain the ways in which the environment and routines are being developed in a way that means it is safe for them to return. Establishing predictability and routines will support a sense of safety.

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<sup>1</sup> Transitions can be associated with changes in people, places, or routines (horizontal) or more significant changes such as returning to school after school holidays, changing class, moving to a new school, or leaving school (vertical).

## **A Supportive Adult**

Evidence from resilience research has shown that a supportive trusted adult is a crucial factor in helping people recover and flourish following adversity. The health and wellbeing of every child and young person is greatly enhanced through the individual support and pastoral care which they receive through having an identified member of staff who knows and understands them and can support them in facing changes and challenges and in making choices.

Time must be protected to allow staff and learners to reconnect through fun activities and have conversations which acknowledge the experiences lived during the pandemic.

## **Staff Wellbeing**

For staff to be able to fully support the wellbeing of children and young people, their own wellbeing must be taken into account. Staff, as well as learners, have faced a period where their own safety and that of their loved ones has been at risk. They will not be able to co-regulate learners whose emotions overwhelm them if they currently feel unsupported or overwhelmed themselves. Staff may also experience secondary or vicarious stress when supporting learners who have been traumatised.

Staff need opportunities to debrief as necessary whether one to one or with peers. Colleagues and senior leaders need to check-in with staff and avoid making assumptions about wellbeing.

## **Children's Rights and Participation**

A children's rights approach to transition planning places children's rights at the heart of planning and delivery and integrates their rights into every aspect of decision making, policy and practice. Part of this approach involves an emphasis on learner participation. Learning is enriched when the views of children and young people are taken into account, particularly when sensitive issues are involved.

Helping learners explore their experience of the pandemic, by considering the impact there has been on their ability to exercise their rights, may be a helpful way to examine their experience.

Offering children and young people the opportunity to influence decision-making and make choices about their learning will help them to feel empowered during a time when they are likely to be feeling disempowered.

## Loss and Change

We have all experienced changes during the pandemic and for many children and young people these changes will have involved loss, for example, missing friends and family, the play park or loss of freedom. Some learners may have encountered traumatic events that threatened their sense of safety. Teaching children about the impact of loss, change and trauma can give important tools to deal with and recover from adverse experiences.

Loss and trauma can be explored as part of learning through health and wellbeing (for example the [Compassionate and Connected Classroom](#) for upper primary). Some learners in the longer term may need access to targeted group work (for example a grief and loss small group programme).

## Nurture Principles

The nurture principles offer us a rich perspective on how we can create restorative experiences for learners whose wellbeing has been affected by trauma, loss and change.

This [blog](#) outlines a range of practical strategies in relation to responding to the lockdown that are based on the nurture principles.

## Getting it Right for Every Child

This policy promotes eight factors that are important when considering wellbeing: safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. Effective partnership working is an essential component of support and for learning in health and wellbeing.

The wellbeing indicators are a helpful way for children and families and those working with them to discuss how a child or young person is doing and whether there is a need for support.

Developing a strengthened approach with community partners will benefit not only our own learners but all members of the school community.

## Inclusive Education

'How Good is our School? 4' describes inclusion as 'taking positive action and intervening in order to enable achievement for all by building and fulfilling the potential of every child, young person and adult'. Practitioners often experience that when they make adaptations for particular learners who require additional support, for example, using visuals, all learners benefit from these actions.

It is important that transition planning identifies vulnerable groups and plans accordingly. Supports such as the [CIRCLE](#) materials help practitioners to optimise the learning environment for all.

## **Health and Wellbeing: Responsibility of All**

Learning through health and wellbeing promotes confidence, independent thinking and positive attitudes and dispositions. Because of this, it is the responsibility of every member of staff to contribute to learning and development in this area.

There are a number of experiences and outcomes within 'Health and Wellbeing: Responsibility of All' that support learning through these challenging times, for example, children and young people learn how to keep themselves and others safe, they develop skills and strategies which support them in challenging times, they understand the importance of mental wellbeing and that this can be fostered and strengthened through coping skills and positive relationships

Remember, we are the most important resource for our children and young people.

Resources		
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	<u>The Compassionate and Connected Classroom: A health and wellbeing curricular resource for upper primary:</u>	Upper primary resources
	<u>Health and wellbeing: Responsibility of all - Making the links...making it work</u>	Professional learning resource for staff including self-evaluation
	<u>Curriculum for Excellence: Health and wellbeing-Principles and practice</u>	Curriculum Guidance
	<a href="#">Health and Wellbeing Experiences and outcomes</a>	CfE
	<a href="#">Health and wellbeing Benchmarks</a>	CfE
	<u>Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027,</u>	Policy
	<u>Supporting Children through Grief and loss</u>	Online Professional learning activity
	<u>Compassionate and connected communities</u>	Online Professional learning activity
	<u>Trauma briefing</u>	Transitions briefing
	<u>Education in times of crisis The potential implications of school closures for teachers and students</u>	Literature review: sections 2 and 3 may be particularly relevant
<b>Relationships and behaviour</b>	<u>Developing a positive whole-school ethos and culture –Relationships, Learning and Behaviour (2018)</u>	Policy
	<u>Respect for All (2017)</u>	Anti-bullying policy
	<a href="#">Mentors in Violence Prevention Secondary School Programme</a>	National Improvement Hub page
	<a href="#">6 steps of trauma-sensitive connection</a>	Poster/thought piece
<b>Children's Rights</b>	<u>Recognising and realising children's rights: A professional learning resource to promote self-evaluation and improvement planning</u>	Professional learning resource-school resource
	<u>Recognising and Realising Children's Rights in Youth Work</u>	Professional learning resource-youthwork

	<a href="#">Progressing the Human Rights of Children in Scotland: An Action Plan 2018-2021</a>	SG plan
	<a href="#">Learner Participation in Educational Settings (3-18)</a>	ES professional learning resource
<b>Nurture</b>	<a href="#">Applying nurture as a whole school approach - A framework to support self-evaluation:</a>	ES self-evaluation framework
	<a href="https://www.epinsight.com/post/supporting-post-lockdown-education-using-the-6-principles-of-nurture">https://www.epinsight.com/post/supporting-post-lockdown-education-using-the-6-principles-of-nurture</a>	Blog
	<a href="#">Nurture, Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma informed practice: Making the links between these approaches, 2018</a>	ES paper
<b>Getting it Right for Every Child</b>	<a href="#">Getting it right for every child</a>	Policy
	<a href="#">One Good Adult</a>	Film (2m 58s)
<b>Inclusive Education</b>	<a href="#">Introduction to inclusive education – Free online professional learning</a>	Online professional learning module
	<a href="#">CIRCLE resource to support Inclusive Learning and Collaborative Working (Primary and Secondary)</a>	National Improvement Hub page with resources
	<a href="#">Inclusion in Practice: The CIRCLE Framework - Secondary Module</a>	Online professional learning module
	<a href="#">Introduction to dyslexia and inclusive practice - Free online modules</a>	Online professional learning module
	<a href="#">The Code of Practice for the Additional Support for Learning Act:</a>	Code to support Act
	<a href="#">The Scottish Government, Excellence and Equity for All: Presumption to provide education in a mainstream setting: Guidance (2019)</a>	SG advice and Guidance
<b>Transitions General</b>	<p>Additional Support Needs and Transitions</p> <p>Leaving Home and going to Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)</p> <p>Leaving home and going to Primary or going from ELC to Primary School</p> <p>Leaving Primary and going to Secondary School</p> <p>Leaving Secondary School</p>	ES national improvement hub pages

