



AfC rtual School
'Together we can achieve!'

Ideas for home learning:

Guidance and support for foster carers, adoptive parents and guardians

Achieving for Children (AfC) Virtual School is here to support you with any questions you have about the education and wellbeing of young people in your care. This information booklet offers advice about young people who are at secondary school, especially those who were preparing to take their exams in the summer term. Please share this information with them, reassuring them that they will not be disadvantaged by the unusual situation caused by the coronavirus and that there will be plenty of support available to them if they feel anxious. adoptive parents and guardians. We have also produced a separate booklet for the young people in your care and we would be grateful if you could pass that onto them.

You can also download our advice about primary-aged children here PDF or visit our websites:

www.afcvirtualschool.org.uk for advice if you are a foster carer, www.afcvirtualschoolpreviouslylookedafterchildren.org.uk if you are an adoptive parent or special guardian

Should young people be going into school during this period if they have been offered a place?

There is an expectation that young people who have a social worker will attend school, as long as it is safe for them to do so. In circumstances where a parent or carer does not want to send their young person to school, and the young person is considered vulnerable, AfC Virtual School, social worker and school will explore the reasons for this directly with the parent or carer, and help to resolve any concerns or difficulties wherever possible.

If you are concerned about a young person attending school, please contact the Virtual School on 020 8831 6037 for advice and support.

These are the reasons why young people who have a social worker or education, health and care plan (EHCP) have been identified as benefiting from a school place:

- supporting the stability of their current school and home placement
- preserving relationships with teachers for young people with insecure attachment
- ongoing educational engagement and stability
- wellbeing, familiar routines and peer group support
- where school attendance provides support and minimises risky behaviours

Here are some reasons why the young person or you might consider keeping them at home:

- their health
- your health, particularly if you have an underlying health condition or are over 70
- you may be self-isolating because someone you have had contact with or in your household may have the virus
- they may be negatively affected by the changes in school
- there is a strong placement and all parties are confident that home education can be sustained through the summer term

ECHPs

If a young person has an ECHP and you're not sending them to school for the reasons above or have agreed to a reduction in their provision during the Covid-19 outbreak, don't worry, this will not be considered to be a permanent change in what they need.

For more information, we have a FAQ about SEND provision during this time on our website:

www.afcvirtualschoolpreviouslylookedafterchildren.org.uk

And visit the local offer pages of AfC, which are being updated to reflect any changes in practice or policy

Kingston and Richmond:

<https://kr.afcinfo.org.uk/pages/local-offer/information-and-advice/covid-19-updates-and-resources/about-this-section>

RBWM

https://rbwm.afcinfo.org.uk/local_offer/blog_articles/2620-afc-rbwm-coronavirus-updates

The government has also provided information about children and young people with ECHPs (from FAQ 20 onwards)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people

Tips for parents, carers and guardians for supporting young people through this difficult time, including managing anxiety

Advice from Dr Sara Freitag, our Virtual School educational psychologist

Children and young people thrive on predictability and routine in their lives. If they have experienced significant change in their lives, which includes becoming looked after or being separated from birth families, they can often find change or loss of routine particularly difficult to manage.

Be aware that their behaviour and emotions might change in response to this current state of uncertainty as they try to adapt to their new situation. They are unlikely to be able to see all the people who are important to them and they may experience a feeling of loss.

Expect that some regression may happen. At times of change, young people may regress to earlier behaviours, for example, wanting to sleep with the light on. This is normal and it is important to try to be as patient as possible.

Young people respond in different ways to change and are likely to draw on a range of strategies to manage this, some of their strategies may appear helpful, whilst others may appear, on the surface at least, to be unhelpful.

They may manage this change by seeking comfort from others more readily. Some of their behaviours may be described as 'clingy' and you may see some regression to previous behaviours, such as wanting to sleep with the light on, etc.

They may need your attention and physical comfort at greater levels than usual to enable them to feel safe and secure and to receive reassurance as they become used to their new situation.

Other young people may manage this change by becoming more emotionally withdrawn, and not wanting to engage as much with others. They may not be able to express what they are feeling and why.

Some young people may express their difficulties managing change quite explicitly, experiencing high levels of emotions that affects their behaviour. This can include being angry or upset.

Young people may also move between these different behaviours. Underpinning all of these behaviours is a young person's need to keep themselves emotionally and physically safe in a world that can be unpredictable.

Strategies that can help

Be alert to the possible significance to young people in your care of any upcoming change, whether large or small. Once you are aware of these potential changes, it becomes easier to plan and prepare them for what is ahead. Give advanced warning of upcoming changes wherever possible and make the unpredictable, predictable. Try to answer any questions they have, even if they repeat them more than once. We have also provided a list of helplines and counselling services available at the end of this section if you need.

Timetables can help young people manage change and feel secure with the expectations of the day. They may need to know plans for the day, or upcoming week but, with your support if needed, they can create a timetable for themselves that makes a good routine for them with plenty of breaks for rest, catching up online with friends, and exercise.

Keep as much the same as possible, trying to keep to regular meal times and household routines going when possible, including when they go to sleep.

Maintain usual boundaries for behaviour. Boundaries show that adults are still in control and taking care of young people, which makes them feel safe.

A young person might want to take something that reminds them of home if they are going into school. This acts as a form of comfort throughout the day.

Allow young people to contribute, giving them an opportunity to have a say in what will be happening at home. The current situation will have meant that many of their freedoms and choices have been removed for a while and they may feel powerless or angry.

Take time out with them. At times of change and uncertainty, a little extra attention can go a long way so even if you are working at home, try to schedule in times during the day for conversations and doing things together, such as preparing lunch or doing exercise together during a screen break.

Resources to support your family's wellbeing

Useful websites

The Anna Freud Centre

www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/anna-freud-learning-network/coronavirus

This suicide prevention charity also has some excellent advice about managing self-care when are you feeling anxious

Papyrus

<http://papyrus.org.uk>

Helplines you can contact for help and advice in an emergency

Young Minds

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/get-urgent-help/#are-you-a-young-person-in-crisis?>

Text the YoungMinds Crisis Messenger, for free 24/7 support across the UK if you are experiencing a mental health crisis.

- If you need urgent help text YM to 85258
- All texts are answered by trained volunteers, with support from experienced clinical supervisors
- Texts are free from EE, O2, Vodafone, 3, Virgin Mobile, BT Mobile, GiffGaff, Tesco Mobile and Telecom Plus

Healthy Young Minds also has a useful list of apps <https://healthyyoungmindspennine.nhs.uk/resource-centre/apps>

Coram Voice runs an advocacy service for young people who are adopted and have a social worker. You can contact them on their website, by phone or email:

T: 0808 800 5792

E: help@coramvoice.org.uk

www.coramvoice.org.uk

The Single Point of Access, also known as SPA, has an emergency number if you need advice from a mental-health professional.

To contact SPA from **Kingston and Richmond** boroughs, call 020 8547 5008 from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, or 020 8770 5000 out of hours. For **RBWM** call 01628 683150 or 01344 786543 (Out of hours - Emergency Duty Team) or email: MASH@achievingforchildren.org.uk

Samaritans

www.samaritans.org

T: 116 123 (24/7, 365 days a year)

Childline (NSPCC)

www.childline.org.uk

T: 0800 1111

Available 9am to midnight.

The anxiety UK helpline is open from 9am till 10pm



Our Infoline Services

03444 775 774 07537 416 905 anxietyuk.org.uk support@anxietyuk.org.uk

The graphic features a dark blue background with the title 'Our Infoline Services' in white. Below the title are four circular icons: a telephone handset, a smartphone, two overlapping speech bubbles, and a laptop. Under each icon is a corresponding contact method: a phone number, another phone number, the website URL, and an email address.



Kooth

A free, safe and anonymous counselling service for young people living in Kingston.

<https://www.kooth.com>

Become

The charity for care-experienced young people offers support and advice about the impact of coronavirus on young people's care.

<https://becomecharity.org.uk/for-young-people/care-advice-line/coronavirus-advice>

We are constantly updating resources to support young people's mental health and wellbeing. For the latest details, please follow this link:

www.afcvirtuelschoolpreviouslylookedafterchildren.org

Keeping young people safe online

As a minimum, ensure that your own home broadband has 'family friendly' filters enabled by default. All major broadband providers are required to have these filters in place.

Internet Matters has age-specific advice for children and young people with useful checklists of what you can do to keep teenagers safe online.

www.internetmatters.org/advice/14plus

Childnet International and **the Safer Internet Centre** have produced a downloadable leaflets for foster carers and adoptive parents, supporting young people's online safety, both of which are downloadable from our AfC Virtual School Internet safety page. You will also find tips to help children and young people challenge fake news about covid-19 online.

www.afcvirtualschoolpreviouslylookedafterchildren.org.ukpage/?title=Internet+safety&pid=208

Advice about GCSE exams

If young people have been entered for GCSEs exams in the summer of 2020, they will be awarded a grade for each subject. Their teachers will assess their work and use that to decide their grades. Teachers will want to take into account progress that students have made since mock exams and will not automatically recommend that students receive their predicted grades.

AfC Virtual School will be working with the teachers of young people looked after to arrive at the best possible outcomes.

These final grades, with all factors considered, will count as the official GCSE results. The DfE is currently advising that grades will be awarded by the end of July 2020.

If a young person's grades aren't as good as they'd hoped, they will have the opportunity to retake 'as soon as reasonably possible' once schools have reopened. They can also retake exams in 2021.

If you would like advice or support about the education of a young person in your care, please contact us. Our contact details are at the end of this document.

Keep up-to-date with DfE guidance about GCSE exams on their website:

www.gov.uk/government/news/further-details-on-exams-and-grades-announced

Advice about vocational courses and apprenticeships

No exams will be taking place in schools and colleges this summer. This will affect young people who were expecting to complete a technical or vocational qualification which involved an exam. At the moment, there isn't enough information about how each different awarding organisation will respond to the current situation, but it's likely that any completed modules and non-exam assessment will provide enough evidence to award them a grade.

Keep checking in with the Ofqual website where this information will be posted when it becomes available. Also check AfC Virtual School website as we will be regularly updating information.

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual

www.afcvirtualschool.org.uk

Apprentices should phone the National Apprenticeship Service for advice. They can be reached on: 0800 0150 600 or email helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk

For government advice about the apprenticeship programme, visit this website:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-apprenticeship-programme-response

Careers advice

Our partner organisation, Fast Tomato, can help with career plans for young people. For a free login, please contact the Virtual School on 020 8831 6037. You can find their website at www.fasttomato.com

A careers worker will be joining the Virtual School soon to give Year 9s and above support in navigating this uncertain time. You can use the contact number above to leave your name and number so that they can call you back once they are in post.

AfC Virtual School contact details

If you would like to contact us, these are our details.

Virtual School Head, **Suzanne Parrott:**

suzanne.parrott@achievingforchildren.org.uk

Deputy Head and lead for Richmond upon Thames:

Paul Chapman: paul.chapman2@achievingforchildren.org.uk

Assistant Head and lead for Kingston, **Clare Farley:**

clare.farley@achievingforchildren.org.uk

Assistant Head and lead for RBWM, **Christina Buckley:**

christina.buckley@achievingforchildren.org.uk

Lead for previously looked-after children's education,

Emma Dyer: emma.dyer@achievingforchildren.org.uk

You can also contact us via the AfC Virtual School address, which will be checked daily (weekdays only):

E: afcvirtualschool@achievingforchildren.org.uk