



Anna Freud
National Centre for
Children and Families

The [Anna Freud Centre](#) aims to support all settings to have a whole-school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing. We believe that all staff have a role to play in promoting mental health and we aim to support them to achieve this.

The Coronavirus outbreak means that communities are facing uncertainty and this can have an impact on children and young people's mental health. We have put together some general tips to support staff throughout this challenging period.

We know schools are on the front line and are playing a hugely important role in keeping communities going in these challenging times. We want to support you in your work, and, because this is an ever changing picture, we will send updates from time to time as advice evolves and we learn more about the situation. We also want to thank all schools and colleges for the amazing work you have already done in supporting children and families.

If you would like to share any concerns and identify any examples of good practice, please let us know at schoolsinmind@annafreud.org so that we can share good practice throughout our network.

If we want to encourage children and young people to engage in support, it is important to stay as calm and thoughtful as possible. Modelling positive reactions in times of uncertainty can help children and young people feel more confident and provide reassurance.

Some staff may also need additional support. Leadership teams should use existing HR and



Wellbeing policies to identify appropriate levels of support

When external events lead to feelings of uncertainty, schools can often be seen as a safe space for children and young people and their families. During these periods, providing clear and consistent messages can be reassuring. Let pupils, parents and carers know that you are following official guidance and that any actions you take are based on expert advice. Share the steps that you are taking to support children, young people and their families and let them know which staff members are available for support each day. Make sure that your communications are age-appropriate and are repeated.

For children and young people who are generally anxious, the experience of uncertainty can be very threatening and can lead to unimaginable increases in anxiety levels. Schools and colleges are in a good position to identify these children. Talk to them about what they're worried about – their worries may be different to adult concerns, and they need to know that's okay. If they appear particularly anxious and clearly need extra support, work with the child, their parents or carers, and those who are close to them to agree together how best to help them.

If a young person is concerned about treatment they are receiving from mental health professionals being interrupted, find out how their support will continue or change and share this information with them. If they are worried about what will happen if they or those close to them become ill, talk openly about this too.

It is important that we avoid making assumptions about how all children and young people may be feeling, and encourage them to speak about and share their experiences, if and when they are ready, in a safe manner.

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- Increase regular communication to parents/ carers in bite size readable format
- Ensure a range of communication to reach all parents, including paper copies
- Direct parents and carers to other key sources of information where relevant
- Promote a range of ways and times for parents/ carers to contact you, including in the event of sudden closure
- Pastoral support for individual, small group

Our Patron:

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