

Information to support families during establishment closures in response to Covid-19

How do I talk to my child about coronavirus?

Children will have heard about coronavirus and it is important that they hear the key messages from someone they trust such as yourself. Below are some tips to help you talk to them.

- Listen to your child's concerns and ensure you acknowledge their worries.
- Focus on answering your child's questions with factual information where you can.
- It is ok to say that you don't know the answers to questions but that you can try to find out for them.
- Remember children learn from your response so try and stay calm when you are answering their questions.
- Try and give practical advice about what everyone can do to help e.g. washing hands and how to do it well.
- Use Social Stories. They are used to present factual information in a clear and visual manner. Originally developed to support the understanding of young people with communication difficulties such as Autism, Social Stories are now recognised as an effective communication tool for all children and young people. There are a few social stories which you might find helpful to share with your child attached to this email.

My child is worried about coronavirus, how can I help them?

While there is a lot of media attention and news coverage about Coronavirus, some children and young people may feel worried or overwhelmed. These tips can help:

- **Monitor media access.** Children should spend limited time on social media under appropriate adult supervision. It is important to protect children from worrying images and rumours that could lead to anxiety.
- **Inform.** It is important that parents filter and share information that is simple, factual and developmentally-appropriate. Withholding information altogether is known to increase children's anxiety.
- **Reassure.** Doctors are learning about this new virus and will give advice on how to keep us safe and healthy.
- **Give control.** Teach children what they can do for themselves, i.e. washing hands, coughing into elbows, getting enough sleep.
- **Role model.** Your child will learn how to react and respond to the situation by observing your behaviours. Acting calmly and confidently will teach them resilient behaviour.



For further advice about home learning, how to discuss Coronavirus with your child and manage any anxieties they may have about the illness you may wish to visit:

<https://www.parentclub.scot/topics/health/coronavirus>

<https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>

<https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/bps-highlights-importance-talking-children-about-coronavirus>

<https://edpsy.org.uk/blog/2020/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-children-families-and-professionals>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk.bitesize/articles/zdx447h>

What should my child be doing while not at school?

- **Routine.** It is recommended that children and young people continue their usual home routine for getting up and dressed, meal times, and bed times. This maintains consistency and predictability.
- **Activity.** It is important that children and young people continue to exercise and play. Getting outside is good for both physical and mental health.
- **Structure.** In school, children would access a variety of adult-led activities, independent tasks, and free/break times. Where possible, try to create a similar structure to their week, including time for school work/homework, while allowing a more relaxed and flexible weekend.
- **Visuals.** Some children need more information about what is happening throughout the day or to support their memory or understanding. Visual schedules, checklists and reminders may help to provide added structure and predictability to their time away from school.
- **Socialise.** As children see less of their friends while schools are closed, protect time to maintain contact with friends and family using suitable technology.

For all other updates and advice about Covid-19 please visit <https://www.scot.nhs.uk/> and <https://www.shetland.gov.uk/coronavirus.asp>

How do I contact the Educational Psychology Service?

To contact the Educational Psychology Service please email:

psychological.service.admin@shetland.gov.uk or telephone: 01595 745588.

