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## Who has Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs?

Schools have a cohort of pupils with identified SEMH needs but there will be those who were *just* coping before lockdown who are now struggling to cope. Use **Return to School: what you may expect to see** to identify typical behaviours we might see as *all* pupils adjust to the transition back to school. Monitor pupils to identify those who continue to struggle over time. These strategies should be considered *in addition* to those in **7MB – Trauma-informed Transition back to school**.

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## SEMH needs and Covid-19

A survey by **Young Minds (2020)** found **83%** of young people who already had mental health needs said the Coronavirus had made their condition worse. **Avoiding social contact** and **staying at home** may have **exacerbated anxiety** for some pupils. Anxiety around infection and the promotion of handwashing may have resulted in increased **compulsive behaviours**. Pupils may have experienced **panic attacks**, **difficulties sleeping** or increased **thoughts of self-harm**. Pupils feeling anxious about infection may find the return to school challenging and may display **school avoidance behaviours**. Transitions have been disrupted & it is vital that **information is shared** with high school for children with SEMH needs in **year 6**.

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## (Re)building support networks

Many pupils have had reduced access to support networks.

- Identify a **key adult** in school that they can go to— involve them in planning who this is / how they can access them / how to let staff know they need to see the adult;
- Draw around their hand; get them to write on each finger the people they can talk to in school;
- **Support networks** will need **rebuilding** and may take time to offer the same support.

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## Emotional regulation

Those with SEMH needs may require more opportunities to access calming activities and practise emotional regulation than before.

- Set aside time to engage in calming activities e.g. meditation, yoga, art;
- Notice emotional states e.g. **7MB - Emotion Coaching**;
- For older young people, channel strong emotions into creative activities (e.g. art and music) or into exercise (e.g. running, going to the gym).

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## Focus on strengths

**Do:**

- Ask what children are proud of from lockdown;
- Ask young people **solution-focused questions** to identify strengths and capacity: e.g. *“What are you good at? What else? What might be a sign that you are finding things a bit easier?”*

**Don't:**

- Use the **language of deficit** e.g. ‘catch up’, ‘gaps’, ‘lost learning’; instead focus on independence and practical skills they may have developed.

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## Further resources

- Child friendly video explaining anxiety: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=so8QN9an3t8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=so8QN9an3t8)
- Booklet by The Anna Freud Centre for transitions: [www.annafreud.org/managing-unexpected-endings-transitions-may2020.pdf](http://www.annafreud.org/managing-unexpected-endings-transitions-may2020.pdf)
- Resources to support 11-18 year olds through specific changes to school: [www.mind.org.uk/supporting-your-teens-wellbeing-during-coronavirus](http://www.mind.org.uk/supporting-your-teens-wellbeing-during-coronavirus)

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## Involve children in planning and monitoring

Give pupils a sense of control by asking them to monitor their own wellbeing and involve them in decisions that affect them.

- Provide daily check-ins with their key adult to monitor their emotions and to practise grounding techniques (see [activities](#) from Mind.org.uk);
- Regularly ask for their views;
- Involve pupils in planning: set targets for themselves and identify the support that could help them. Involve them in wider planning e.g. school councils.

Contact details: If you'd like to discuss further please contact the Educational Psychology Service ([EPS@salford.gov.uk](mailto:EPS@salford.gov.uk) or [educationpsychology@tameside.gov.uk](mailto:educationpsychology@tameside.gov.uk))