Transition back to schooling after lockdown

This pack is designed to help children and young people, foster carers and the whole team around the child reflect, plan and prepare as schools reopen.

Evidence shows that most children in foster care have not been in educational settings during the Covid19 pandemic, and individual experiences of learning and the support offered have been very different across the UK. Some children and young people have thrived on one to one support and the removal of external pressures, others have experienced increased anxiety and other mental health problems.

The diverse experience of education during lockdown has highlighted the need for a personalised approach to education plans for looked after children.

In a recent survey The Fostering Network heard that 74 per cent of foster carers said they were unaware of any special arrangements in place to support looked after children when they return to school post lockdown, demonstrating the importance of making these plans now.

The return to school may be a challenging time for families across the UK. A stressed or anxious child cannot learn and so it is vital schools work together with the whole the team around the child to support individual social and emotional needs as well as academic progress.
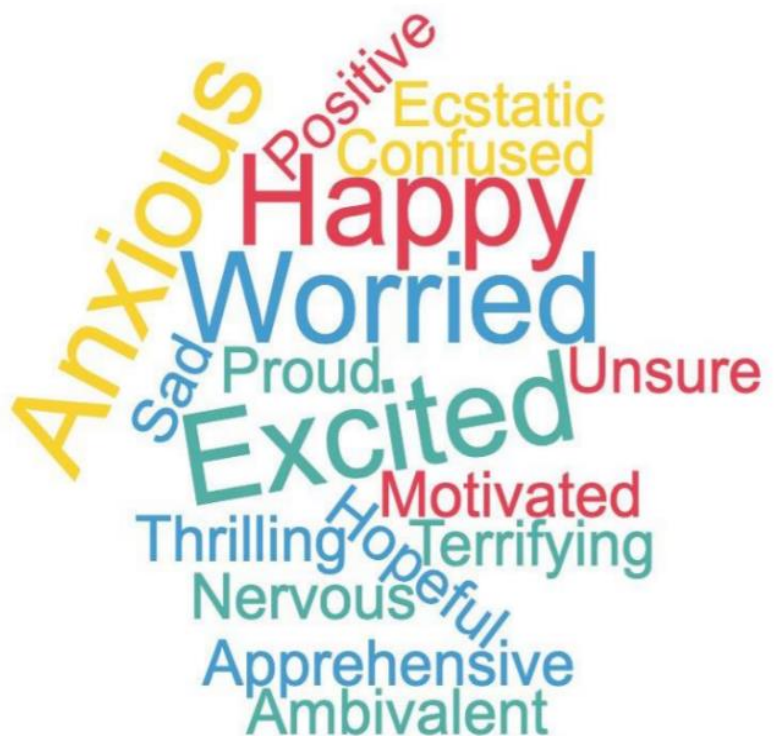

Figure 1 Children and young people's feelings about returning to education in September

How to use this resource pack

The five tables over the page are designed to get the whole team around the child proactively engaged with ensuring a positive return to school and planning appropriate ongoing support for all children and young people.

These could be used in transition/return to school or Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting or you may use them to frame questions you have for the school and make sure they are informed of the child or young person's experiences during lockdown.

1. Changes to the structure of school
2. Transition back to learning
3. Reflections on school and learning during lockdown
4. Support in School
5. Action plan

Tables one and two are questions for your school, college or educational provision to make sure children and young people, their foster carers and social workers to set expectations of what school will be like and prepare for the new term.

Tables three and four are designed to be more reflective and personal, focusing on the voice and experience of the child or young person and their carer.

Table five asks those involved to reflect on everything discussed and make an individualised plan to support the child or young person to have a positive return to education and schooling this August or September.

Who should be involved in this meeting or conversations and plans?
The tables focus on the three key contributions of child or young person, foster carer and school but it is vital the child's social worker and Looked After Children's Education Service (LACES) or Virtual School are involved in these conversations to ensure plans are realistic and actioned.

- Child or young person
- Foster carer
- Children's Social worker
- Virtual school or LACES
- Class/form tutor for September 2020
- Designated teacher for looked after children in school
- Teacher who has had most contact with the pupil during lockdown
- Other services involved with the child or young person i.e. Personal Advisor, Special Educational needs coordinator, Child and Adolescent mental Health Service

At the end of this document you'll find links to further resources around supporting children and young people with transitions in education.

1.Changes to the structure of school	What does the school need to tell the foster carer and young person
Has travel to school and arrival on site changed?	
Does school **look different –** are playgrounds or classrooms divided or rearranged?	
Will school time be structured differently? • Will there be whole school assemblies? • Will breaks or lunch be staggered? • Will classes be different lengths? • If children previously moved classrooms will they now stay in the same room? • Is PE affected? What about changing rooms	
How will classes be arranged? Will they be smaller and how are these groupings decided?	
Are there things pupils are now expected to bring to school?	*e.g. lunch, subject equipment*
Are there things pupils are now not allowed to bring into school?	*e.g. fidget spinners.*
What might feel missing from the school experience?	*e.g. Choir, Rugby etc.*
Is the school going to be doing more digitally? How will they ensure all pupils have suitable equipment?	
Any questions the child or young person has about what might have changed at school	
Any questions the carer, or children's social worker has about what might have changed school?	
ACTION: is there anything further the school needs to share? • Who will do this? • When will they do it by? i.e. provide photos of school, timetables etc	

2.Transition back to learning	What does the school need to tell the foster carer and young person
How will the school **manage the transition** period for return for the whole school? • Will there be a 'welcome back' period? • How will ongoing support be provided?	
How will the school identify and address the individual **emotional and social needs** of pupils transitioning out of lockdown into a busy school environment?	
How will the school **celebrate children and young people's achievements** made during lockdown in an inclusive way?	
How will the school identify and **address learning gaps** which have developed during lockdown?	
How will the school ensure provision of additional support doesn't stigmatize those who need it?	
Anxieties around the return to school may manifest in disruptive behaviours. How will the school ensure they are restorative approach rather than punitive to this ensuring all pupils settle back in?	
Where classes are ability streamed - If this is based on pre-March 2020 attainment how will children and young people be supported to catch up if they have not kept pace of their peers in some areas? - If new assessments will be undertaken how will the school ensure those who take longer to adapt to the return to the busy school environment are not disadvantaged?	
Any questions the child or young person has about returning to school	
Any questions the foster carer or children's social worker has about returning to school	

3.Reflections on school and learning during lockdown	What does the child or young person think or want to tell their carer and their school?	What does the foster carer think and what do they need to tell the school and the young person?	What does the school need to tell the foster carer and young person?
What went well? Is there anything we want to continue?			
What was challenging or didn't work?			
What has the child or young person gained from this period? • Digital skills? • Independent study skills? • Did they help siblings? • Strengthened relationships? • New area of interest or passion? • New skills or talent?			
What did you learn about the child or young person's relationship to learning during this period?			
If you were home schooling how did you feel about the work set? • Was it at the right level or did it seem too hard or too easy? • What was enjoyable? • What was hardest to engage with? • Have you become aware of any learning gaps?			
Was it possible to do all the work set for home? – were there barriers i.e. technology, postal service, broadband, suitable study space? How might these be overcome in the future?			

4. Support in school	What does the child or young person think or want to tell their carer and their school?	What does the foster carer think and what do they need to tell the school and the young person?	What does the school need to tell the foster carer and young person?
What support was in place when the pupil was last in 'regular' school? • Academic • Pastoral			
What worked well and what didn't?			
What support was provided during lockdown? • Academic • Pastoral			
What worked well and what didn't?			
What should be continued and what shouldn't?			
Where can the child or young person go if they feel anxious?			
Are there any gaps in learning identified or developed during this period that the pupil should be supported with?			
If the pupil built a positive relationship with a teacher or member of staff at school during lockdown how will they be supported to maintain this relationship?			
Are any members of the school not returning? The school may have lost members of their community to Covid19, but other people may have retired, moved, be on maternity leave; pupils may fear the worst if people are 'missing'.			

5.Action plan

Name _____   **Date_____**   **Review date _____**

		Who is responsible for arranging this?	When will they do it by?
What individual academic support will be put in place? What is this designed to achieve? Ensure any targets are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-based). How will we assess the effectiveness of this intervention?			
What individual pastoral support will be put in place? What is the intention of this support? How will we know this is helping?			
What might the child or young person need additionally to ensure they are able to fully engage with their education? Consider technology needs if the school will be doing more work digitally or in the event of further extended time away from the classroom.			

Resources from The Fostering Network

Education can change lives. Together with good quality foster care it can transform fostered children's life chances by unlocking their potential. To understand more about fostered children's experiences of education during the pandemic, we launched a survey for foster carers and fostering services across the UK.

The survey results have provided an understanding about both the educational experience of fostered children during lockdown and their needs as they transition back to school, **read they key findings and recommendations here**.

We recognise the hard work of young people to all young people receiving their post-16 qualification results in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland this year. They and their foster carers, social workers and teachers have done incredibly in the face of a difficult and unsettling academic year.

Visit our Covid hub for signposting to guidance relating to each country alongside useful resources, helplines and advice and are being regularly updated for Foster Carers and here for Fostering Services.

Further resources for supporting children and young people with educational transitions

- 7 ways to support children and young people who are worried Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families:
- Be Awesome, Go Big - Transition Resources for Year 6 Pupils These free printable resources have been created to prepare Year 6 pupils for the transition to secondary school.
- Cruise Bereavement care offers support and guidance to schools for dealing with loss
- Managing the transition back to school: a guide for schools and colleges Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families
- Mentally Healthy Schools School Transitions: Risks and Protective factors
- Moving up! Activities to do with your family over the transition to Secondary School Produced by the Parental Engagement Network
- NSPCC have created podcasts and resources about returning to school after the coronavirus lockdown
- Starting or changing school resource bank from the National Autistic Society
- Top tips for pupils moving on to secondary school from The Foundation for People with Learning Difficulties
- YoungMinds have created this resource bank supporting pupils through the transition back to school, there are lots of reflective activities to download and do at home.