

HOME AND SCHOOLING DURING LOCKDOWN

ADVICE FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH SEND

This guide will provide advice on how to make the most of home life and schooling during lockdowns and is specifically aimed at the parents/carers of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).



AVOID PUTTING TOO MUCH PRESSURE ON ACADEMIC WORK

- Don't try to replicate a full school timetable – it won't be possible to replicate a full school timetable for a variety of reasons. Giving yourself and your children permission to accept this can be a big weight lifted.
- It is more important to be spending time together, building relationships, enjoying shared activities and reassuring children.
- Many children with SEND will compartmentalise home and school, and may refuse to do school work at home. If you can't motivate your child to do "academic" work at home, you could try to work on their speech and language targets, physiotherapy targets, or independence and life skills – this is really valuable too! Your child's therapist should be able to provide guidance and ideas for games and activities that don't feel like "work" and school will be able to talk through other activities for home learning.
- Families can also use the **daily exercise time as educational time**, for example by playing games about what they see on their walk.
- Try to keep school or project work in one place – this can help to maintain a work/home boundary. We know that different home situations might mean this isn't always possible, so perhaps there might be other ways to 'signal' the end of 'working' e.g. putting away the work and then enjoying a favourite song or shared dance!
- Play is fundamental to children's wellbeing and development – children of all ages! It's also a great way to reduce stress in adults. Be creative in your home activities

BE CREATIVE IN YOUR HOME ACTIVITIES

- Set up a den in the house or a camp in the garden – This activity can be useful to create a safe place for children and a place they know they can have some quiet time.
- Do puzzles, Lego, visual-spatial activities – these activities tend to be calming as the brain focuses on putting things together rather than verbal or emotion demanding tasks. Offering these activities in the house will be of benefit to everyone as it will help all involved to be grounded and calm.
- Set up a fun project such as: making a scrapbook of different drawings, paintings, making characters out of modelling clay, picking up leaves from the garden and finding the name of the tree online, taking photographs of wildlife in the garden such as birds, animals, painting rocks with emojis on them, drawing a cartoon strip or writing a collection of short stories, inventing characters and drawing these – there are so many things that can be done!
- Start a collection – stamps, stones, leaves and lots of other things can start collections.
- Play board games



BE PROACTIVE ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

Make plans in the face of events that are scary and largely out of our control, it's important to be proactive about what you can control. The activities below can help children and young people to feel in control, needed and capable are helpful.



invite children to help plan activities for the day

Helping around the house with chores

COOKING TOGETHER

Involving children in decision making, e.g. making a shopping list.

learning a new skill together and/or teaching a new skill

Implementing routines for self-care and mindfulness

When a child says they miss something, make a 'bucket list' to look forward to in the future when restrictions have been lifted.



Help children stay connected to their friends. Friendships are a key resiliency factor for children and young people. Most children see their friends nearly every day of the week and so not being in contact with them for some time might be upsetting. Is it possible for children to talk to their friends on the phone? Perhaps establish a group Skype or WhatsApp call? Perhaps they could write letters to each other?

ENCOURAGE HEALTHY HABITS

- **get fresh air!** Social distancing does not mean you have to be cooped up inside the walls of your home. It is important for kids to get active outside time every day, and research shows daily time outdoors boosts adults' health and wellbeing.
- **exercise regularly!** If you have a garden you could set up an obstacle course and time them going through the course. Walking the dog and playing with an animal can also be part of the routine.
- Some children with SEND will find it difficult to follow social distancing rules. They may not be safe in traffic or may display challenging behaviours, for example, if they are told they can't go into the playground. Try to find the way of getting some fresh air and exercise which works best for you and your child. You may need to think about the best time of day, driving somewhere for your child to exercise safely, or you may need to get out of the house more than once a day. Parents can ask services that support their child (like their social worker, MAST worker, CAMHS consultant) to write them a letter that details their support plan if they are challenged by the police or others or could take evidence of their child's disabilities out with them. You should, however, still aim to keep as close to your local area as possible and at least 2 metres apart from anyone who is not a member of your household or a career.
- Keeping a **consistent sleep schedule**, with predictable times to wake up and go to bed, is especially important to maintaining a positive mood
- **eat healthy meals!**

For more information, please see Sheffield City Council's advice for support children with SEND:

<http://www.malinbridgeprimary.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/advice-from-sheffield-city-council-family-send-information-21.01.2021.docx>