

Transition Back to School following Covid-19 – Building Resilient School Communities

The transition back to school following the Covid-19 closure is a new experience for all of us. Most of us our lives have been turned upside down and we had to re-learn to function in a completely different climate, with unexpected challenges and opportunities. We have all- children, parents and staff - faced a loss in routine, separation from family and friends and for some, the worry of losing our income and jobs.

We have very little experience to draw upon in this new venture; nonetheless, previous major events in a community's life, such as epidemics or earthquakes, together with current communication we hold with school staff, parents and, at times, children, helped us understand what the circumstances might be for the Norfolk schools and their population, and how we could be moving forward, minimise stress, preserve mental health and even more, develop positively in the future.

What do we know works?

1. It is important to have and strengthen the sense of community, where
 - a. Basic practical support is primarily important, followed by
 - b. Social and emotional support

2. Most are resilient and do not require extra social, curricular, or emotional support, hence it is very important:
 - a. Not to pathologize normal reactions to the situation (e.g. grief, high stress)
 - b. To nurture optimism, mastery and social support
 - c. Help develop coping strategies via psychoeducation and targeted interventions, when necessary.

3. Perceived health and economic status are major factors in one's resilience and wellbeing.

Transition back to school is more likely to have a positive psychological impact if schools:

- Adopt a **community approach**
- Help **school staff** reconnect to schools, families and pupils
- Help **families**, and **children and young people** reconnect to schools.

Specific guidance is available in separate e-leaflets.

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