

Considerations for Personal Protection Equipment (PPE). If you have been using PPE to carry out care needs then this will continue as normal. You may need to reflect on performing health care needs for children with complex medical needs such as tracheostomies or lower immune systems and if PPE needs to be introduced when performing care routines. This can only be decided on an individual basis and in conversations with parents and health care professionals. All PPE used must be medical grade.



Communication is key - Share information with parents about how you are keeping yourselves and the children safe and minimising the risks of infection. Have open and honest conversations, listen to them and acknowledge the way they are feeling. What are the parents really worried about?

Take the time to reconnect. Children and families experiences of the pandemic will greatly vary and though you will not be able to listen to every individual COVID story, you can provide real, honest and transparent communication about how the setting will look and operate and what your priorities will be as you reopen to new children or welcome back existing children.



The 'New Normal' - COVID recovery planning for our SEND children

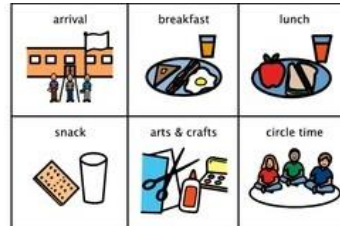
SEND support planning - in discussions with parents, review progress and areas of development and write a SEND support plan. It might be advisable to check in on the professional support the child has had during their time away which could inform your SEND support plans. Make the plan and then watch and wait - observe the child, offer support in play, scaffold the learning and then revisit the plans after a settling in period - which would allow for any regression, emergence of new behaviours and time to adjust to new routines.



Have the conversations, listen to the experiences! The children's experiences and understanding of the pandemic will vary. Some will be aware, whilst others may have had a more sheltered experience. Simply parking the "COVID period" and marking it as done isn't going to help some children process what has happened. With that said, it is not the time to introduce 'COVID Q&A' to your welcome time but, as you always do, allow conversations to naturally flow with children, listen to them and offer options for them to play out those experiences. We may need guidance and support on some of those trickier conversations if children and families have dealt with loss and it is important to know where they can go to gain that support.



Updates to visuals - Lots of our SEND children make use of visuals to help them to understand routines. It may be advisable to consider the introduction of some new visual/ social stories to explain any new routines or changes to the setting - e.g. increased PPE usage or areas which are not in use.



Read and share the DfE and local guidance - It is important to make sure all the team are updated with recent guidance and how this is reflected in your setting. Share through staff meetings and clear written procedures and take time to unpick, to ensure all staff are on the same page and understand all the processes. Take time to share any significant changes as they develop and to ensure everyone is aware of procedures and can and can't dos.



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SENCO and grouping considerations - The 'new normal' will see larger groupings of children in settings but with some restrictions remaining. It will be important to think about how your SEND children will be supported within these groups and make sure that all staff are aware of the support needs of the SEND children in their group. Considerations may also need to be made for the SENCO and key person roles - have you got contingency plans if they are unable to return to the setting or have to continue to self-isolate? Is there another practitioner within the setting who is able to cover the role of SENCO, to ensure that the SEND children continue to be supported?



Don't be afraid to strip back the curriculum - Some of the children returning may have been away from your setting for 6 months. Your focus then shouldn't be a panicked catch up curriculum plan to cram in all of the lost time. Remember the principles and foundations of early year's education. Children will only learn when they are feeling safe, secure and connected. Focus on the EYFS prime areas - make time to reconnect, build relationships, re-establish routines and focus on providing a secure base for the children to explore.

Think Maslow - hierarchy of needs and Leuven scale

<https://family.co/blog/management/leuven-scales/>

<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-4136760>

