



To all Headteachers

**Children, Young People and  
Education Directorate**

Sessions House  
County Hall  
MAIDSTONE  
Kent ME14 1XQ

Phone: (03000) 416991  
Ask for: Matt Dunkley  
Email: [matt.dunkley@kent.gov.uk](mailto:matt.dunkley@kent.gov.uk)

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear Colleague

As the number of children attending school this term under the current Government guidance continues to increase thoughts are naturally turning to September. The Government has stated that they intend all children of all ages to be able to return to school full time. It is being widely reported that this would be achieved via the bubbles in primary year groups increasing in size to include a whole class, and for secondary year groups to act as larger individual bubbles. We await a formal announcement from Government, but in conjunction with KAH we continue preparing further guidance to support schools and settings based on a number of scenarios.

**Exceptional Costs Associated with Coronavirus**

Late yesterday afternoon, the DfE updated its guidance on claiming exceptional costs associated with coronavirus (COVID-19), tightening the criteria for eligibility and clarifying areas of potential additional expenditure related to wider opening.

The revisions cover:

- the impact of schools' financial reserves on eligibility for this funding
- support schools can access to cover the loss of self-generated income which is not covered by this fund
- confirmation that schools should proceed with a phased wider opening and any measures associated with it within existing resources, as any costs incurred as part of that process cannot be claimed through this fund

They have reiterated that funding is available to cover costs relating to the specific items they judge necessary to have enabled schools to provide appropriate support to children attending school during the period of partial closure. They have confirmed that this does not include lost self-generated income. Funding is available to schools that are unable to meet such additional costs from their existing resources, or which they

could only meet by drawing down on reserves and undermining their long-term financial sustainability.

Schools are not eligible to make a claim against this fund if they expect to add to their existing historic surpluses in the current financial year (September 2019 to August 2020 for academies and April 2020 to March 2021 for maintained schools). This means schools cannot claim if they began their current financial year with an accumulated historic surplus and expect to increase that surplus this year and thereby finish the year with a higher level of reserves than they started.

Schools are eligible for reimbursement where the additional costs associated with coronavirus (COVID-19) would:

- result in a school having to use historic surpluses
- increase the size of a historic deficit
- prevent the planned repayment of a historic deficit

All maintained schools and academies/trusts are expected to submit a claim directly to the DfE. The claim should be for actual costs incurred to date and the deadline for the first submission is **21 July 2020**. Schools should not submit estimated costs as there will be a further opportunity in the autumn to claim for any further actual costs incurred up to the end of the Summer Term that were not covered in this first submission. The following link gives further details on how to access and complete the claim form:

- Instructions on how to submit a [claim](#)
- Link to updated [general guidance](#) on claiming exceptional costs associated with COVID-19

### **Summer Free School Meal Vouchers**

The DfE has today released details for schools on how to order vouchers to cover the summer period through the Covid Summer Food Fund. Schools can support eligible pupils with a £90 voucher to cover the 6-week holiday period. The Edenred portal, which schools have used to order vouchers as part of the national voucher scheme, will be used to order vouchers. If you have not yet activated your account, you will need to do so.

You must order the voucher at least one week before term ends, and it will be issued to the family within 7 days.

Any child currently in receipt of benefits-related free school meals or who becomes eligible during the summer term is eligible for the Covid Summer Food Fund, this includes current Year 11's leaving school at the end of term.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-summer-food-fund>

## **Wider Opening**

Prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> June I confirmed to you that if schools can demonstrate they have used best endeavours to adhere to Government and KCC guidance and engage fully in trying to implement appropriate safeguards through risk assessments, then their defences against any claim will be strong, and the Local Authority would support a school where a claim is brought forward.

This support remains in place, as does the Government guidance relating to the operation of schools this term, which has remained largely unchanged since 1<sup>st</sup> June. We are aware that a number of schools plan to offer provision in a way that does not accord with the current guidance. This includes:

- Ending of term early to offset the time that schools remained open at half term and Easter
- Holding of sports days
- Rota-ing of pupils,
- Shortening of term for some year groups to offer two weeks for pupils not currently in school to attend for a fortnight
- Pupils joining the school in Year R in September attending school this term
- Planning now for a delayed start to Term 1 in September, either for the whole school or individual year groups

It is absolutely understandable that schools wish to explore all opportunities for as many children to attend school this term as possible, especially as the hard work of schools has meant that the wider opening this month went well and confidence is high. However, the virus remains in circulation within the community and it is important that the prevailing guidance is followed today for the protection of staff, children and society.

## **Support for Previously Looked After Children.**

Please can I remind you that for any Previously Looked After Child (those who have previously been in the care of a Local Authority and now have an Adoption, Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order) whose parents/guardians request that they return to school must be considered within your vulnerable pupils category. Please contact VSK for further information, help and advice around this.

Can I also ask, please, that you make sure someone in the school has spoken with those families and let them know that VSK can support with home learning and transitioning back into school if necessary. There are leaflets available on their website <https://www.virtualschool.lea.kent.sch.uk/plac/> which I urge you to pass on to families who have children who have left care under a Special Guardianship (SGO) , Child Arrangement Order (CAO) or Adoption Order. Please encourage them to contact VSK on their generic email address [VSKPLAC@kent.gov.uk](mailto:VSKPLAC@kent.gov.uk).

In April, The Department of Education announced additional funding for Previously Looked After Children to fund therapeutic support for children and their families during this pandemic. The Local Authority will use their allocation of this funding to provide a range of support options and we are in the process of confirming how families can access these. If you know of any families (particularly SGO Guardians) who may benefit from extra support during this time, please do contact us. We will be able to provide additional information for those families within the coming days.

VSK have invested in a range of training opportunities for schools who have Previously Looked After Children on roll with them. They are able to offer this free of charge to you, so please do get in touch if you are interested in any of the following:

### **Community Resilience Training**

VSK and Kent Cairns Training Associates have put together this initiative to support schools with Previously Looked After Children (and Looked After Children) in order for school staff to have a better understanding of these children's needs and the impact that Covid-19 has had on them and the adults in their network on whom they rely for co-regulation as the bedrock to learning and healthy development. By increasing schools' knowledge around trauma in response to the pandemic, staff will be able to support children and each other transition back into school and back into a trauma informed community where resilience can develop again.

Course details are appended to this letter.

### **Emotional Health and Wellbeing Resources in Kent's Return to School Guidance**

We know that emotional wellbeing and mental health are key priorities in ensuring a successful transition for both students and staff returning to school. Kent's Specialist Teaching and Learning Service and Kent's Education Psychology Service have developed new resources with partner agencies within Kent specifically for reintegration, which can be used with children and young people to support both classroom and virtual delivery.

You'll find these resources and guidance within chapter 7 of Kent's [Return to School Guidance](#), designed to support schools in making decisions on how best to support their community's emotional wellbeing, as well as knowing what to do if a member of the school community requires extra support. The resources have been coordinated and developed based on the current evidence base and national guidance, as well as expertise from Educational and Mental Health Specialists across Kent.

It is recognised that much of the advice and many of these resources will be of use to services who support young people and families outside of school or remotely. They are designed to complement existing resources and to dip into as and when needed. Each strand includes different levels of response according to an individual's level of need.

The information is **not** designed to be sent out directly to children, young people, and parents and carers, rather to provide you with guidance and resources to support your conversations with them.

### **Water Safety this Summer**

We have recently been written to by Gabbi Simmonds, Water Safety Manager for the RNLI in the South East. With the recent wonderful weather that we hope will not be the last we experience this summer, she is asking whether schools can alert parents to the additional safety risk to beachgoers this year as lifeguards cannot be placed on every beach. Her message, links to resources which we would encourage you to share with parents and her contact details are also appended.

And finally, we have also expanded the information sections in the daily admissions return to enable those schools who have children in Years 2 to 5 attending, accurately reflect their numbers following contact from a number of schools asking why they were not able to submit a return that reflected their true position. We hope that schools find this helpful and do not see it as an additional burden during a particularly busy and stressful time.

Yours sincerely



Matt Dunkley CBE  
Corporate Director, Children, Young People and Education

## **Appendix 1 - Virtual School Kent Community Resilience training.**

This blended learning programme consists three blended courses comprising of a webinar with follow-up access to e-learning and resources which can be used for up to 10 certified CPD hours if required. The programme is based on the KCA's learning pathway for building community resilience (synopses for the three e-learning that underpin this learning pathway is attached). The first webinar and the blended course it provides access to, is the first block of the pathway and is vital learning for the whole school team. It is not a requisite that everyone attends every course through the programme but it is advised that as many people as possible register for course 1 and that those who later participate in course 2 and 3 have attended course 1.

KCA is delivering the first course twice this term - with the live webinars taking place on the Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> July from 3.30pm – 5.30pm and Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> July from 3.30pm to 5.30pm. Ideally people would access the live webinar at those times, but for those who are unable to, there is a facility to watch the videoed webinar at a more convenient time as long as you have registered in advance. The webinars are delivered by KCA via Zoom. KCA have run the necessary risk assessments and have the license and data protection to use Zoom.

Please ask staff to register for the first Webinar (**8<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> July**) by using following this link: <https://connected.kca.training/register.cfm?form=vsk-plac-cv19rrr-webinar>

If you have any further questions regarding this, please do let contact VSK. They have had a very positive response from schools so far, with many of them taking up the offer of whole school attendance to the webinars. Please register your interest as soon as possible in order to secure a place on these courses.

### **Other Online training available.**

We also able to offer AC Education online training to staff members and anyone working with PLAC. AC Education offer a wide range of short courses, covering a range of subjects aimed at supporting vulnerable pupils with a range of additional needs. All courses are free of charge via VSK. [VSKPLAC@kent.gov.uk](mailto:VSKPLAC@kent.gov.uk)

### **Course 1**

#### **The webinar: Covid 19: Restoration, recovery and resilience on schools in Kent**

Toxic levels of stress can injure our brains, changing the way we think, feel and behave until we have recovered from the injuries. This can happen to anyone, and at times of significant social adversity such as pandemic or climate change it will happen to many. This webinar, and the e-learning which accompanies it, enables school staff to reflect on the implications of trauma-informed practice under such conditions and prepare for the

return of more children to school, and in particular the heightened needs of previously looked after children. It will shine a light on participants own vulnerability and resilience, helping them find ways to work together to strengthen school communities by supporting the development of trauma informed practice

This first course includes the 90-minute webinar (which can be attended live, or accessed retrospectively via a recording). Having attended or watched the webinar, every participant will then have access to a range of web-based learning resources

## **The e-learning course**

### *Community Resilience and Toxic Stress: working with trauma across the life-span*

- *Understand the impact of unregulated stress on brain function*
  - *Identify key areas of human development that may be affected by toxic stress*
  - *Summarise the key difficulties that may affect traumatised people*
  - *Explain the phases of recovery from toxic stress and trauma*
  - *Identify key principles in promoting recovery from trauma*
  
- *Understand promoting recovery for traumatised people*
  - *Toxic stress and community resilience*
  - *Reflect on how to encourage and support people with their recovery from toxic stress*
  - *Describe how community support helps people with their recovery from trauma*
  - *Explain the importance of being able to act as an advocate on behalf of traumatised people to ensure their needs are met in relation to recovery from trauma*

## **Appendix 2 - Emotional Health and Wellbeing Resources in Kent's Return to School Guidance:**

The information below provides a summary of each section:

[CYP Kent Emotional Wellbeing flow chart](#) - This directs staff to the most appropriate support for their students when faced with concerns about their emotional wellbeing or mental health. The flow chart includes reference to the [Resilience Conversation Tool](#), which facilitates conversations with young people to listen to their experiences and can enable solutions to be found.

[Emotional Wellbeing in Schools; including universal and transition support](#) - Many schools are already providing safe, stable, and nurturing environments for their children and are rich in resources to promote wellbeing. This section contains bespoke resources for [universal emotional wellbeing support](#), [transition wellbeing](#) and [Early Years](#), if required. They include specific support for reintegration through checklists, toolkits, guidance and practical classroom resources.

[Staff Wellbeing](#) - Reintegrating back to school life can be a challenge at any time but that demand is even higher during the current climate of uncertainty and change. Here you'll find information, resources, and services that should support you and your colleagues in this process.

[Emotional Wellbeing – Young People](#) - This section highlights support available for young people to access independently, in addition or instead of support sought from school staff, carers, or friends. It includes a variety of means of support, for example, web-based guidance, online counselling, text support, phone calls, conversation tools, etc. These are known to encourage many young people to share how they are feeling and to reassure that it is normal to feel anxious at this time.

[Emotional Wellbeing Support for Primary School Aged Children](#) - Here you'll find paramount support options for primary-aged children and their parents/carers. The resources are predominantly focused on activities, mindfulness exercises, and supporting the understanding of the COVID-19 changes. The services referenced focus on The School Public Health Service and the [CYP Kent Emotional Wellbeing](#) services.

[Practical Resources for Parents and Carers](#) - The guidance in this section reflects the central role parents and carers play in developing their knowledge and skills to support the emotional wellbeing of their child as well as themselves.

[Practical and Emotional Wellbeing Support Following Bereavement](#) - The extensive information, resources and services included in this section will provide support to practitioners to enable them to help children and young people following bereavement. The guidance can help to foster new networks of support and highlights a school's role in providing routine and consistency when other aspects of life are disrupted.



[Emotional Wellbeing for Vulnerable Pupils](#) - This is a new resource developed by STLS and KEPS, focusing on vulnerable students. The information included here features an additional [google drive](#) with checklists, activities and resources to use with children and young people in all settings.

[Emotional Wellbeing – Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities](#) - Some students will need support in all areas of the curriculum due to a level of learning need. As these children and young people return to school following Covid19 the resources in this section will be able to direct staff to appropriate support. This section is also supported by a [google drive](#) containing practical resources, links to services and risk assessments.

[Emotional Wellbeing – Highly Anxious Students](#) - Here you'll find additional resources developed by STLS and KEPS providing initial guidance to meet the immediate challenges for highly anxious students who are perhaps not attending school. The [google drive](#) includes an introductory brief guide to anxiety, tools to 'measure' anxiety and create a back to school plan, resources for interventions, whole school good practice, tools for managing anxiety during (and after) the Covid-19 pandemic, recommended reading and further suggested resources.

## Appendix 3 – Message from the RNLI

Local Authority in the South East Region I am writing to you from the RNLI about our new education resources. By means of introduction, I have recently been appointed as Water Safety Education Manager in the South East Region.

**This summer, our Lifeguards cannot be on every beach, meaning a heightened water safety risk to beach goers. We are asking you to help us share some important messages to children and their families.**

We have already seen the influx of beach goers in the past few weeks after some of the restrictions were lifted and the summer weather arrived. In a normal year the RNLI alongside other water safety partners helps thousands of people who end up getting into difficulty in or close to the water when doing these types of activities.

Throughout the summer term, our local team of trained volunteers and Lifeguards do their best to visit as many of the schools, colleges and youth groups in our region as possible. However, due to the ongoing coronavirus outbreak we have not been able to engage with school communities as we normally would in the South East.

We are asking you in partnership to support us in spreading the water safety message through your communication channels to our target audiences. This may be on social media, websites, or through promotional materials.

We have taken the time over the last couple of months to carefully condense and design our resources which are aimed at primary and secondary school children, whilst also ensuring they are appropriate to be taught from home or through online classrooms. This can be done by a parent, guardian or teacher.

**Below, you will find out ways in which you can help at this time.**

- **Help us to promote** our [Water Safety from Home Resources](#). Educating young people about how to keep safe, in on and around water is fundamental to saving lives at sea and a core part of the RNLI's water safety activity. This term we have put together two downloadable packs of resources focusing on **keeping safe this Summer**.
- Please help by **sharing** the [RNLI](#) & MCA's [Beach Safety Campaign](#) with parents, guardians and your wider network.
- Our [beach safety resources](#) are also available for download to use on social media and online.

Finally, I would like to thank you in advance for any support in spreading the water safety message with us. We appreciate the current times are busy and challenging and any support you can give really will help in spreading awareness to young people and their families about how to keep safe at the beach.

**Gabbi Simmonds | RNLi Water Safety Education Manager | South East**

M: 07786 126548 | W: [rnli.org/youth-education](https://www.rnli.org/youth-education)

