

**Lockdown and the transition back to school: Considerations for children and young people who have experienced difficult relationships and trauma**

All children and young people (CYP) will have been trying to make sense of the current situation, but for some vulnerable CYP there are certain factors to be mindful of. (*It is important to note that children looked after (CLA) or previously looked after children (PLAC) may or may not be within this group*):

- For some CYP the lockdown may have brought a feeling of security and relief; offering a physical sense of containment, reduced transitions and the opportunity to really bond and connect with their parents/carers. This could make returning to their school feel difficult. For example, feedback from the Virtual School (VS) indicates that for many CLA/PLAC they have benefitted from building relationships at home.
- The VS reported that some CLA/PLAC have completed more work at home than they did in school. This could be due to increased support, work being differentiated and tailored to meet their individual learning needs and realistic expectations. It may also be due to a reduction in triggers that can occur in the classroom e.g. anxiety, low self-esteem, high stress levels.
- Lockdown may have reminded some CYP of the abrupt endings and losses they have already experienced earlier in their lives. Therefore they may be feeling less safe right now. It is important to recognise this and it may lead to changes in behaviour. However, the difficulties previously experienced by some CYP may have helped to build up their resilience to deal with difficult situations.
- For some CYP there may have been a reduction in much of the support available to both themselves and their parents/carers e.g. limited or no access to school, seeing friends, attending clubs, therapeutic services and as stated above, the feeling that relationships have come to a sudden end. However, the VS has shared that for CLA/PLAC there has been a high level of contact/ 'checking in' from themselves, school staff and other professionals. Personal Education Plans have continued to be completed virtually.
- For some CYP, relationships will have continued to be or become very strained and there is the potential for family breakdowns.
- It is likely that CLA who see their parents/carers will have experienced a change in the pattern and type of contact e.g. indirect contact by phone or video link. How successful this has been will vary from child to child. The VS shared that where this has not gone well and/or the contact has been reduced, there has been an increase in negative behaviors shown by the CYP.
- For some CYP who have continued to attend school since lockdown, and have also seen some of their peers return to school, they may find the transition process of greater phased return more challenging. Particularly if they have grown accustomed to working in smaller groups with more immediate access to staff. Some CYP may feel insecure with the thought

that they will have to share their teacher or key adult with more peers, or they may experience a lower tolerance level for others as their class sizes increase.

- It is important to remember that transition and change can be difficult for many CYP who have insecure relationships or have difficulties in processing information. It is therefore important to take time with the CYP and include them in the wider conversation of change. Sitting down to plan and prepare with the CYP about what may happen or will happen allows time for the CYP to process and come to terms with the transition/change and help to allay any anxieties they may have.