

INSET 2020/21

Reintegrating pupils following closure. Staff Training



LINCOLNSHIRE
PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES



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Training objectives

- **Understand** the spectrum of issues for pupils returning to school
- **Spot** the signs of anxiety, trauma and grief
- **Act** to support pupils who are struggling with any of these issues





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OBJECTIVE 1

Understand

Put yourself in our children's shoes

UNDERSTAND



- > Bereavement
- > Separation anxiety (doesn't want to leave mum in the morning)
- > Witnessed domestic violence
- > Parent made redundant or furloughed
- > Parent works in the NHS
- > Family member is seriously ill
- > Not enough food to eat at home
- > Was caring for younger siblings at home

What we're doing for all pupils

UNDERSTAND

- Assemblies on wellbeing and mental health
- Class discussions and circle times to discuss worries and concerns related to lockdown or coronavirus
- Support for parents to help them feel confident that school is safe, including information on the school website
- Extra cleaning of school spaces
- Staggered break and lunch-times
- Year groups forming bubbles and staying in their allocated spaces
- Opportunities for children to receive extra support if needed



Anxiety

UNDERSTAND

Minor worries
and anxiety

Often thinking
about worries

Anxiety affects
behaviour and
thoughts every day

Anxiety is getting
in the way of
everyday life

Not a problem



Potentially becoming a problem



A problem



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OBJECTIVE 2

Spot the signs

The specific issues we'll be looking at ...

- > Anxiety
- > Traumatic stress
- > Grief

SPOT



Anxiety

SPOT

An older child suffering from anxiety might:

- Lack confidence
- Be tired
- Have angry outbursts
- Have a lot of negative thoughts
- Start avoiding everyday activities



Traumatic stress

SPOT

A child suffering from traumatic stress might:

- Be unusually tired
- Become fearful
- Seem to regress in their behaviour
- Seem preoccupied
- Have physical symptoms



Grief

Following a bereavement, a child might show any of these responses:

- Alternating between play and sadness
- Tiredness
- Mood swings
- Regression and loss of skills
- Anger and frustration
- High-risk behaviour
- Lack of response, or denial



SPOT





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OBJECTIVE 3

Act

Act

- **Create opportunities to talk** within the school day, building in some unstructured time into the timetable or at the end of a lesson. Don't force it: create situations where these conversations can occur naturally
- **Create safe spaces to talk**, such as quiet spaces in the playground or classroom, or quiet areas/rooms available at break or lunchtime where adults are available to play or chat (observing social distancing guidelines)
- **Label feelings and link them to body cues and behaviour** – use phrases such as 'I noticed ...', 'I wonder if ...' and 'Could this be ...' Sometimes children don't know how they're feeling, so by suggesting an emotion and linking it to a behaviour you're helping them make sense of their emotional responses and giving them the opportunity to confirm or correct you
- **Allow for comfortable silences, show open body language and listen actively**
- **Normalise what they're feeling**, and reassure them it's ok to feel this way. Use examples from your own life to illustrate times when you have felt a certain emotion, how it felt and why
- **Acknowledge the child's views/worries/pains** and listen to what they say, e.g. "that sounds really difficult", "is there anything I can do?"
- **Reassure the child that they are safe at school**, and that school is a safe place
- **Try to answer questions as honestly as possible**, in an age-appropriate way. It's ok to say that you don't have all the answers
- **Ask questions rather than give advice**, to help the child generate their own solutions or coping mechanisms
- **Use empathy, rather than sympathy**
- **Let them know you're grateful to them for opening up**, e.g. "thank you for sharing that with me"
- **Let them know how, when and where they can speak to you again** if they wish, and suggest a time you can check in with them

Summary of key points

- Children will be returning to school affected by a spectrum of issues, including separation anxiety
- Most children will adapt and settle back into school, but others will need more support
- Be alert to the signs of potential anxiety, traumatic stress and grief
- If you spot these signs, report your concerns to any member of the safeguarding team
- Support children to talk about their experiences and feelings
- Be aware that safeguarding disclosures are likely to increase at this time. Follow school procedures for reporting them

