

Advice for Parents and Carers - How to support the wellbeing and learning of your children during the coronavirus outbreak.

Learning at home should be play based and fun, but we recognise that it is hard to have fun if you are unclear, unsure and not confident about how to support your child at home during these challenging times.

- **Be realistic.**
Avoid putting too much pressure on yourself to be a superhero. Try not to worry if you need to complete work or take time out for yourself. There are no awards for the Best Home Education Parent. Simply try your best!
- **Accept this is a learning curve for everyone.**
Stay in regular contact with your child's setting or school. They will provide resources and practical ideas to support you through the period your child stays at home. Give their suggested activities a go. If you are unsure of any words/ terms or themes that are mentioned, Google them or search for YouTube videos to explain activities you are not sure of. Accept that you might not get it right all of the time.
- **Be prepared.**
Get comfortable and prepare for the sessions with any pens, paper, or equipment you may need. Grab a drink and a few healthy snacks and prepare activities in advance - be prepared to be flexible if things do not go to plan.
- **Timing**
Choose the right time and remember that children can only concentrate for short periods of time. Childhood development experts generally say that a reasonable attention span to expect of a child is two to three minutes per year of their age.

If a child is very keen you may see prolonged interest but on average, this attention spans will work out roughly:

- *2 years old: four to six minutes*
- *4 years old: eight to 12 minutes*

If you notice your child fussing, whining, eyes wandering away, struggling to engage with you and even becoming more aggressive, you have probably reached their maximum concentration level and boredom is starting to creep in.

Take the hint, it is time for a change or break.

The importance of routine

Having a set routine where your child/children can help during wake-up times, meals, nap, and bedtimes is a great way to get your child involved. They love to feel they are playing an important and fun role in making each day run smoothly. For some (but not every child) introducing a reward system to promote activities that they are struggling with may help.

- **Variety is key.**

Allowing children to play safely and independently whilst you are near for short/ reasonable periods of time is ok! However, children thrive when they have the opportunity to learn through carefully planned playful moments. Take turns in deciding which activities to try. Sometimes, you can take the lead in planning and trying out some of the suggested activities. On other occasions, let your child take the lead in planning different activities that you can try immediately or for the next day. Be spontaneous and surprise your child with a new adventure or new activity.

- **Avoid cabin fever.**

Allow time to relax and recharge your batteries. Getting outside for a quick safe and socially distanced walk is a must. Take time to talk about the coronavirus outbreak and why and how it is affecting you and their lives. Reassure them that we will get through this together. Try logging on to some child friendly websites to explain the virus ([Children's Commissioner link](#)) or read books to explain what is happening ("[While we can't hug](#)" - read by Bolton Library, "[Don't worry, Little Bear](#)" - a free online storybook).

- **Avoid distractions.**

If you can, put your mobile phone on silent or vibrate, whilst you are giving your child your full attention. Turning off any background noise, such as the radio or TV, will also support your child's attention and ability to listen.

REMEMBER

- You are a parent/ carer - you are not expected to become your child's teacher.
 - You are not expected to teach the same hours or cover the same topics that they would be expected to cover in school.
 - You are not expected to download or buy resources that are shown or used by childminders or in the nursery or school.
- You can do a lot of activities with things you already have in and around your home, using things like washing up bowls, sponges and leaves.

For more ideas and tips, visit:

- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BoltonStartWellatHome>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>
- <https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk/>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people>
- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-children-aged-2-to-4-to-learn-at-home-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

Finally, look after your own wellbeing.

It is important to recognise your own feelings and do not be afraid to ask for help if you are feeling overwhelmed.

Make regular time to contact friends and family. Do not underestimate the need for your little one to be in touch with their friends. Find opportunities to arrange play dates online.

If you are struggling, visit:

- <https://www.mind.org.uk/>
- <https://www.gmmh.nhs.uk/bolton-psychological-therapy-service/>

Remember we are all in this together.