



# Creating Opportunities for Connection Experiencing Being Held in Mind

Collated by Louise Noel and Julie Harmieson

There are many ways to reduce the rupture of emotional connection during social isolation, the following ideas have been compiled from many contributions from TIS UK trainers and practitioners across the country.

## EAA – ideas for vulnerable children who are supported 1-1 or in small groups:

- **Post** – short letters, jokes, rhymes, postcards, transitional objects e.g. friendship bracelet (add a note with what each colour represents e.g. I chose yellow for joy and all the times we have laughed together), little felt hearts, photo's – any postcards should be placed in an envelope to send.
- **Creative packs** – craft, play, calming activities, feelings diary, wellbeing ideas, familiar activities that EAA did with child that can be easily replicated/ recreated by the child (add little post it notes of support in amongst the pack). One school has left extra packs in the local supermarkets for parents/ carers to collect when shopping.
- **Notes** – written on or in lunch bags for children who are receiving them everyday
- **Attachment activity cards** – to do with parent/carer if appropriate.
- **Postcards** with images of places in the community for the child to visit – staff member could let the child know that when they visited that place today they thought of them and would the child be able to think of the staff member if they were able to visit the same spot.
- **Email** – (agreed and arranged by Headteacher with guidelines in place) – agree a time EAA will read it – could include websites that child may be interested in. e.g. Chester Zoo or something you know will be of interest to the child.
- **Phone calls** – to check in (school guidelines will be needed).
- **Zoom or other online sessions** – for checking in (school guidelines will be needed).
- **EAA Helpline** – families/children given central number, staff taking call notifies child's EAA and they call the child back when possible.
- **Doorstep drop in's** for vulnerable children whom school have not been able to contact (safeguarding procedures & social distancing guidelines applied).
- **Surprise sunflowers** – drop off seedling in a pot with instructions on how to grow.



## Class friends at home or at school who can connect with those at home:

- **Create Pen pals** – choose children/friends to write to one another, this could be those children at home with those children at school or all children who are at home
- **Hide objects in the local area** for children to discover on their walks – decorate pebbles with messages on – children and staff can both take part in painting them and hiding them (this could be used for EAA & vulnerable children also)
- **Clay figures/faces on trees** – use self-drying clay to make faces on trees on children's daily walk routes, for ideas see <https://nurturestore.co.uk/clay-sculptures-at-the-just-so-festival>
- **Chalk drawings/messages** left on pavements around community or outside friend's houses
- **Connecting through class programmes** e.g. Dojo or SeeSaw



## School Community – Children:

- **Family challenges** – e.g. the headteacher at Colby Primary School posts Mrs Mead's Daily Challenge on the school's Facebook page such as:
  - **Learn how to cook** a jacket potato/invent a sandwich or a toastie and design a poster advertising it
  - **Tidy your room** – ask your adult to show you how to use a vacuum cleaner/duster
  - **Memories** – looking at photos together; think of a nice memory – try to picture it as if you had taken a photo; draw a picture of it



- **Dress up/dress down Friday** – design an outfit and send it to school
- **Music** – listen to favourite music/songs together; make up your own song/dance
- **Keeping in touch with someone you care about** – phone, email, write a letter, send a picture
- **Captain Tom and inspirational people** – saying thank you: make thank you posters for school's bin collectors so that the school bins could be covered in thank you messages. Adult to take a photo of the poster and email it to school
- **Community walk** – by staff & wave to children in their homes
- **Treasure hunts** – for children whilst on daily walk – instructions and clues posted or sent out through email. Each point has a little message from EAA or school staff.
- **Stories read by staff** – uploaded onto social media or school website – these could be stories children will enjoy or ones to help children with REFLECT about the current situation e.g. Julia Donaldson 'The Gruffalo stayed in the Cave'
- **Wellbeing Challenges** – activating PLAY, SEEKING & CARE
- **Messages of support** – video clips from staff e.g. creating fun video's like the toilet roll video – see Ince C.E Primary School Twitter (and many others), songs sung and videoed by staff and children in school to put on school website or social media
- **Pictures/messages** – hung on school gates or frontage – this could include countdown for when school begin again once this is known.
- **Weekly Bulletin** – to the children from staff





### School Community – Staff:

- **Messaging groups** e.g. WhatsApp, closed Facebook group
- **Online check-in meetings**
- **Letters & postcards**

### School Community – Parents:

- **Helpful** websites/links shared with parents e.g. Anna Freud, Winston’s wish, Childhood Bereavement Network, Young Minds  
<https://www.annafreud.org/media/11263/option-3-covid-advice-young-people-with-image.pdf>  
<https://www.annafreud.org/media/11261/option-3-covid-advice-parents.pdf>
- **Supportive messages** – examples from schools include – Dojo, Email, phone calls
- **FAQ’s link**
- **Advice on helping children with REFLECT** – direct to online books, articles e.g.  
<https://www.heysigmund.com/how-to-help-children-feel-calm-during-a-global-crisis-talking-to-kids-teens-about-covid-19-and-other-gobal-trauma/>  
<https://nursedottybooks.files.wordpress.com/2020/03/dave-the-dog-coronavirus-1-1.pdf>  
<https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Pandemics-and-the-Coronavirus.pdf>

- **Dr Tina Bryson** is an American Psychotherapist and has produced a number of videos to support parents during the Covid-19 pandemic.  
<https://www.tinabryson.com/media-archives>
- **Activities to support children** – e.g jar with ideas of what they would like to do once lockdown has finished – focused on the future

### Ideas for families to stay connected:

- **A hug in the post** – large piece of paper, adult draws around the child with arms open. Children then draw their features, clothes and colours the body outline in. This is then posted to their family to receive.  
Example below:  
<https://www.familiesmagazine.com.au/mail-a-hug/>
- **Letters, pictures, postcards**
- **Phone calls, face time** – family sing along, games, treasure hunts, eye spy (all whilst on screen)





### **PROTECT: Some reminders!**

Please be aware that methods of connecting online via live streaming must have the explicit consent of the Headteacher and additional risk assessments put in place to ensure that both you and the child are safeguarded. We only recommend this way of working where practitioners have attended specific training around live streaming.

Any use of online contact should follow the policies and principles of safe working practices within your organisation, and you should only use those platforms approved of by your settings.

Where possible, use equipment provided by the school to ensure your privacy is protected and ensure you follow protocols in keeping the contact details secure in line with your setting's guidance to remain GDPR compliant.

Any disclosures made during a live streaming connection should be handled according to the safeguarding policy in your setting and your designated safeguarding lead should be informed as soon as possible and with the greatest urgency.

Finally, please be aware of and follow the current guidance on social distancing and leaving the home when conducting any home drive or walk by's.

**Thank you to all those practitioners who contributed to this document. In sharing your ideas, knowledge and experience we can maximise the positive impact that we can all have, both during the restrictions and further into the future....**

