

## Oxfordshire School Readiness newsletter April 2021 - Issue 9

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We recognise the challenges during COVID-19 and appreciate the invaluable support you have given to children and families in Oxfordshire, thank you for all you do. We hope you have a restful Easter break.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition of the newsletter. Don't forget to email [SchoolReadiness@Oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:SchoolReadiness@Oxfordshire.gov.uk) by the 27th of the month with your news.

### How can you help to shape School Readiness in Oxfordshire?

We are creating an information-based website for parents and carers and would like to understand what support and information is already available and how we can utilise this to create a 'One Stop Shop' for advice, support and information for parents and carers.

It would be very helpful to know what you are doing to support children and their families and for you to share your resources, information and virtual sessions which could be included on the Early Years parents and carers virtual support pages.

If you haven't already done so please complete the Readiness for School consultation which can be found [here](#)

There is also a questionnaire for parents to establish what information and resources would be helpful for them. Please share this [link](#) with any parents you work with.

## Congratulations to....

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The staff at First steps family hub in Chalgrove who have been presented with an award by the High Sheriff of Oxfordshire, Amanda Ponsonby, for their work 'in recognition of their great and valuable services to the community'.

Amanda visited whilst Maria and Anna were running the Zoom meeting for parents to pass on her congratulations. It is a wonderful award to achieve and well deserved in recognition of the amount of energy they have put in since the Hub reformed, and particularly over the last year. Pre COVID-19 times there would have been a ceremonial event in Oxford, but obviously changes have had to be made due to the restrictions. We look forward to seeing the professional photographs when they are available.



## Strong Home Learning Experience to support children's learning and development

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### **Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning**

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) has produced a guidance report, designed to support primary and secondary schools to work with parents – particularly those from disadvantaged homes. It offers four clear and actionable recommendations which we hope will support an evidence-informed approach.

Four [recommendations](#) on working with parents to support their child's learning

1. Critically review how you work with parents
2. Provide practical strategies to support learning at home
3. Tailor school communications to encourage positive dialogue about learning
4. Offer more sustained and intensive support where needed

### **Penny Tassoni tells us what school ready means.**

Penny is a well-respected early years expert who has written a number of books on child development. She is also president of PACEY. She has made videos for PACEY, exploring what being school ready means for children, and how practitioners and parents can support this time. You can find out more [here](#)

### **Netmums helping children get ready for school**

Netmums have top 10 tips to help parents get their children ready for school. Click here for [more](#)

### **10 healthy snack recipes from Family that children will adore**

Next up, we've got [10 healthy snack recipes](#) that children will absolutely adore. They're delicious, nutritious, and incredibly simple. From caterpillar sandwiches to chocolate banana bread, these recipes are perfect for handy little helpers in the kitchen. There are lots of hidden vitamins and minerals in there too!

### **Covid 19 and handwashing: Protecting children's hands from dry skin and eczema**

After more than a year of increased handwashing during the pandemic, children and parents alike are struggling with the drying effects on their hands. [The British Skin Foundation](#) shared some advice with [Early Alliance Family Corner](#) about protecting children's hands from drying out, particularly if they have eczema.

### **Having that Monday morning feeling**

Dr Tina Rae has shared her Sunday evening and Monday morning plans to support parents and carers as they attempt to nurture anxious children back to school. Click here to see [more](#)

### **New playful resource for families to support children's emotional wellbeing**

Clear Sky, a local children's charity who deliver specialist Play and Creative Arts therapy and provide CPD to professionals, schools and parents, have put together the 'Parents Play Kit'. The kit is available as a FREE resource for parents to support children's emotional wellbeing. The 95-page kit has been developed by our team and is packed full of creative games and resources that can be utilised at home. The resource is aimed at children aged 4-11 and can be downloaded [here](#)

### **Accessible resources for children with a disability in lockdown**

Parents have highlighted there needs to be further accessible resources for them and professionals and here are some that were shared with us, They are taken from this [webpage](#) which has lots of other useful information in supporting children and young people in lockdown. .

[Learning Disabilities England](#)

[National Autistic Society 1](#)

[Books Beyond Words.](#)

[Easy read information about the rules to stay at home](#) (Public Health England)

[Easy read advice on how to stay at home](#) (Public Health England)

[National Autistic Society 2](#)

[Explaining Coronavirus for People with Learning Disabilities and other videos](#)  
(Surrey and Borders Partnership Trust)  
[Change for life](#)

### **Bedtime practice**

Children's bedtimes can be a very stressful time for a parent or guardian! Bedtime routines can affect children's wellbeing, development and health. Despite their importance, there is limited evidence on what makes an optimal bedtime regime. Our partners at @communitydentalservices are very happy to see that toothbrushing is part of this! For more information head to Bedtime best practice click [here](#)  
Carers toolkit Also have a look at the [Oral health toolkit](#) for carers

## **Early Engagement**

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### **Free early education for eligible two-year olds.**

We are keen to encourage those eligible to attend their funded place in the Summer term, to play and learn whilst meeting friends. The number of eligible two-year olds has increased, and the council has written to every family to make sure they know that they are eligible if they choose to send their child.

We would encourage those working with families to spread the word and encourage families to contact Oxfordshire's Family Information Service who can help with applications and finding places. A childcare search can be completed by a parent/carer at [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation) or alternatively parents can email [fis.enquiries@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:fis.enquiries@oxfordshire.gov.uk) or call 01865 323332

### **Supporting children with a disability during lockdown**

I notice taken from this [webpage](#) which has lots of other useful information in supporting children and young people in lockdown. .

[Learning Disabilities England](#)

[National Autistic Society 1](#)

[Books Beyond Words.](#)

[Easy read information about the rules to stay at home](#) (Public Health England)

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[Change for life](#)

### **Managing anxiety, stress and self-harm in children and young people**

We were due to have Dr Tina Rae come to our School Readiness conference back in November, unfortunately due to the pandemic the conference was cancelled.

Tina delivered a session at the World Education summit recently with a focus on managing anxiety, stress & self-harm in children and young people. The session clarified the need for trauma informed approaches in schools to prevent the escalation of difficulties which have been exacerbated during this current COVID pandemic. You can see a recording [here](#)

### **Film captures views on wellbeing in Oxford's multi-ethnic communities**

A short film and report capturing views of some of Oxford's diverse and multi-ethnic communities on wellbeing was presented to the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board meeting last week. The film and report is the culmination of a year-long collaborative project by Oxford Community Action and Healthwatch Oxfordshire to hear views on wellbeing from members of Oxford's new and emerging communities. Read more [here](#) Watch the film [here](#)

### **World autism awareness week**

World autism awareness week is 29 March - 4 April 2021.

[Autism.org](https://www.autism.org) has some free early years resources to encourage children to explore the idea of difference.

### **Did you miss the launch of the Birth to 5 Matters guidance?**

The agenda was:

Introduction: Beatrice Merrick, Chair of the Early Years Coalition Steering Group

Background to the guidance and FAQs: Nancy Stewart, Project Lead

How Birth to 5 Matters can support practice:

- Fundamentals – Tamsin Grimmer (Inclusive Practice Working Group)
- Unique Child, Pete Moorhouse (Characteristics of Effective Learning Working Group)
- Positive Relationships, Stella Louis (Parents as Partners Working Group)
- Enabling Environments, Lydia Hogburn (Learning Environment Working Group)
- Learning and Development, Julia Manning-Morton (PSED Working Group)

The evidence base:

- Sharon Colilles, Project Assistant
- The Birth to 5 Matters guidance online: a quick tour: Nancy Stewart
- The Characteristics of Effective Learning – clips from their new film
- Q&A – Panel

To see the recording of the event click [here](#)

## **High quality provision**

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### **The Department for Education has today published the final version of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework.**

The new framework, available [here](#), will come into effect on 1 September 2021, and the Alliance has given a summary of the main changes [here](#). Following a recent consultation, a number of small amendments have been made to the safety and welfare requirements of the EYFS, which the Department for Education has summarised [here](#). You can also see Vodcasts [here](#)

Don't forget to book your training session with the Early Years team [here](#)

### **The possibility Tree**

The joy of the Possibility Tree is that its concept is based firmly in the joy of language and its playground. We can reach up into the branches of the Possibility Tree and pull down all manner of possibilities to chat about with children. The Possibility Tree is an imaginary one of course, but its ability to bring an added dimension to chat can be very real indeed. Greg Bottrill tells you more [here](#)

### **How to run a Virtual Open Evening**

Virtual Open Evenings has the potential to permanently transform how you approach nurturing your prospective students right through to enrolment. This short course explores how you can use live and hybrid virtual open evenings to their maximum potential.

Available as part of the [School Website Manager Membership](#) or for individual purchase. [Enrol today for £20](#)

### **How do you support children and families with Autism?**

Chris Packham, CBE is National Autistic Society Ambassador and he says "The greatest discomfort for autistic people can be the social one. For me, I was confused by the way people behaved."

Help others learn more about autism by sharing 'What is autism?' film, narrated by another ambassador, Alan Gardner. Click here to [watch](#)

## Information-sharing and high-quality transitions through life

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### **Children Heard and Seen.**

Four parents that Children Heard and Seen support were interviewed by the BBC about their experiences in lockdown and the impacts on the children they care for. Watch the interviews on our website by clicking the link [here](#)

### **Please find below the April edition of the Short Breaks Update**

**newsletter.** Please do share it with anyone else you think might find it helpful including the families that you are working with. Thank you to Pauline for sharing this with us.



SB Update - April  
21 Final.pdf

## Transitions in early years

Transitions are central to children's development and emotional wellbeing; the way transitions are supported affects children's capacity to cope with change and indeed the impact can last into adulthood.

Stories and activities shared via social media during lockdown have been warmly welcomed by parents and children and this approach could be extended as part of your settling arrangements, including a virtual tour and overview of routines in the setting to watch at home.

Information sharing is important for children attending multiple settings to support smooth transitions. With permission from home, children's development information can be shared, and providers can work together to ensure that children are supported, and their individual needs are met.

The [draft Birth to 5 Matters document](#) contains pertinent information to support all transitions within early years.

For further information about Early Years transitions visit [Early Years Foundation Stage Transition Pack | Oxfordshire County Council](#). This information has recently been shared with The All-Party Parliamentary Group on a Fit and Healthy Childhood with other professionals and parliament members.

### Harvest at home – Can you help?

We're reaching out to our partners and networks to recruit households for Harvest @ Home.

Harvest @ Home, provides food security from the ground up. We give supplies and guidance to help people grow their own food. We helped over 400 people facing food insecurity due to COVID get growing in 2020, and this year we're looking to reach even more of our neighbours.

Over 80% of our users have never grown anything before, and they say, "this is brilliant, makes it so easy!" We can provide indoor and outdoor kits, so if you or anyone you know might be interested please sign up for Harvest@Home, via this [link](#)

We always need more volunteers and gardening mentors, as well, so if you DO already grow your own food and would love to help others please sign up to volunteer [here](#)

If you have any interest or questions at all feel free to e-mail us (Emily and Nienke) at [harvestathomeuk@gmail.com](mailto:harvestathomeuk@gmail.com) or call 01865 817676.

### NEW Dedicated NSPCC helpline 0800 136 663

The new helpline will provide both children and adults who are potential victims of sexual abuse in schools with the appropriate support and advice. This includes how to contact the police and report crimes if they wish. The helpline will also provide support to parents and professionals too

## COVID-19 updates

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### **[Face coverings: when to wear one, exemptions, and how to make one](#)**

This page explains when to wear a face covering, exemptions from wearing one, and how to make your own face covering.

Updated guidance to reflect changes in restrictions after 29 March.

### **[Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)**

What childcare services early years settings, childminders and local authorities need to provide during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. This version has been updated to reflect the DHSC announcement that a confirmatory PCR test is required following a positive LFD test result in England.

### **[What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during COVID-19](#)**

Information for parents and carers about attending schools, nurseries and colleges in the spring term 2021.

Updated guidance on:

- home testing for students
- changes to shielding
- returning to boarding schools
- Test and Trace support payments
- wraparound provision
- school trips
- confirmatory PCR tests for secondary and college-aged students
- Ofsted Inspections.

### **Symptom-free testing at home and community collect for parents and carers**

With Easter fast approaching, continuing with regular testing during the school break remains a crucial part in our fight against the virus.

The government is encouraging all households with nursery, primary and secondary school and college-aged children and young people, including childcare and support bubbles, to take part in twice-weekly rapid lateral flow testing. This is mainly through a community collect scheme using home test kits.

If you're an adult in one of these households and don't qualify for the county council's [symptom-free testing programme](#), you can collect home testing kits (each contains seven lateral flow device (LFD) tests) from any local testing site across Oxfordshire – symptomatic sites 2.30pm - 8pm and symptom-free sites during their opening hours. You do not need to make an appointment to collect home test kits but you can [check online](#) if the location is open or busy before you go. If you cannot get to a site, you can order home test kits on [gov.uk](#), where they will be delivered to your home.

If you or your child has COVID-19 symptoms, you must self-isolate immediately and [book a symptomatic \(PCR\) test](#) at one of Oxfordshire's five symptomatic testing sites as soon as possible. Do not attend a symptom-free site or use a lateral flow device.

The symptomatic test sites are where people go to get tested when they have symptoms of COVID-19 – and because of that, collection of these home test kits is set for when testing of symptomatic people will not be taking place. The symptomatic local testing sites offering community collect 2.30pm - 8pm in Oxfordshire include:

Regional testing site (drive-through):

Oxford Parkway, Water Eaton Park & Ride, Oxford Road, Oxford (OX2 8HA)

Local testing sites (walk-through):

- Woodgreen Leisure Centre, Woodgreen Avenue, Banbury (OX16 0HS)
- Osney Lane, Oxford (OX1 1NY)
- Woodford Way car park, Witney (OX28 6JS)
- Fuller Building Restaurant, Oxford Brookes University, Headington (OX3 0BP)

Community collect of lateral flow home test kits is available at all the county's symptom-free sites during their opening hours:

- Spiceball Leisure Centre, Banbury (OX16 2BW): 7am-7pm (Mon-Fri); 8.30am-12.30pm (Sat)
- The Beacon in Wantage (OX12 9BX): 8.30am-7pm (Mon-Fri); 8.30am-12.30pm (Sat)
- King's Centre in Oxford (OX2 0ES): 8.30am-7pm (Mon-Fri); 8.30am-12.30pm (Sat)
- New site: Brownes Hall in Carterton (OX18 3JH): 8.30am-7pm (Mon-Fri); 8.30am-12.30pm (Sat)

For those using lateral flow tests at home, the sample is collected using a swab and needs to be tested following the instructions provided. The result is confirmed in 30 minutes and needs to be reported to the NHS on [gov.uk](http://gov.uk). Once a home test is completed, the kit should be placed into the bag provided and disposed of with general household waste.

A secondary PCR test will be required for positive lateral flow tests that are taken at home. For anyone testing positive for COVID-19, a [self-isolation information pack](#) is available to help provide advice and sources of support. If any result is negative, people must continue to follow social distancing guidelines, wear a mask in public and regularly wash their hands.

Community collect lateral flow tests are for eligible adults and should not be used for testing children. Children and young people at school or college should continue to use lateral flow tests provided to them by their school. For further information on the types of tests available, you can read the answers to a number of [frequently asked questions](#) on the county council's website.

## Articles/News/Reports/Research

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### **Early years - review to improve babies' and children's healthy development in their first 1,001 days of life in England**

The report sets out six action areas to improve outcomes for babies and children, including: establishing Family Hubs where parents can access services; design digital, virtual and telephone offers around family needs; and ensure local and national accountability.

Read the press release [here](#) Read the policy paper [here](#)

### **Coronavirus: spotlight on our services one year on**

NSPCC Learning has published new and updated information on safeguarding and child protection during COVID-19 one year on from the first national lockdown. It includes new information on what we've learned about helping children and families during the pandemic.

NSPCC Learning has also published a report on delivering local direct services to families during the pandemic, which looks at the experiences of practitioners, delivery partners, parents, carers and children involved in virtual and face-to-face delivery of services.

View resources [here](#) Watch the videos [here](#) Read the report [here](#)

Read the article [here](#) Listen to the podcast [here](#)

### **Experiences of disabled children and their families during lockdown 3 (Disabled Children's Partnership)**

The Disabled Children's Partnership is a major coalition of more than 80 organisations campaigning for improved health and social care for disabled children, young people and their families.

This lockdown report from the Partnership revealed that disabled children did not receive support for their disability or medical condition via health services or their school placement. Parents report a detrimental impact of their child's disability during a time of reduced level of informal and formal support at home during the pandemic.

Three-quarters of families reported delays to routine health appointments for their disabled child. Over half (51%) of families stated that these delays had a negative impact on their child's condition. As a result of these delays, families reported additional problems with anxiety and behaviour (70%), sleep (66%) and loneliness (65%). More than 3 in 10 families (34%) felt their disabled child had depression.

The situation is compounded for those children accessing support for their disability via their nursery, school, college or placement. Seventy per cent or more children could not access therapies such as Occupational Therapy, Physical or Physiotherapy, Play Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy or Music Therapy. 72% of families reported that their EHCP or SEN plan had been negatively affected during the pandemic, with 67% stating that they were getting some or none of the support detailed. Read the full report [here](#)

## **Life expectancy in England in 2020**

Public Health England has released [provisional estimates](#) of life expectancy at birth for 2020 to show the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in England and its regions.

## **Children in poverty**

The Department for Work & Pensions has published reports on the number of children living in low income families from 2014 to 2020 and the number and percentage of children in low income households from 1995 to 2020 in England. The figures show that, for children under 16-years-old or 16- to 19-years-old in full-time non advanced education: 31% of children were in relative low income households after housing costs, with 25% in absolute low income after housing costs in 2019/20; 12% of children were living in low income and material deprivation in 2019/20, up 1% since 2018/19; and the North West and West Midlands regions had the highest rates of children in low income families.

**View the report** at [Households below average income: for financial years ending 1995 to 2020](#) & [Children in low income families: local area statistics 2014 to 2020](#)

## **Coronavirus: children's wellbeing and the power of play**

Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital (GOSH) has published a report looking at the impact of the coronavirus crisis on children's wellbeing and how lockdowns and restrictions have affected how children play. Findings from a survey of 2,543 parents of children aged between 5 -11 years old, from across the UK include: 30% said that COVID-19 was the topic most explored by their child in play; 66% said they are worried that restrictions on how children play will impact on their child's future wellbeing; and 61% of parents reported that are bonding with their child more than usual through playing together during the pandemic, this particularly true for fathers, with 55% saying they spend more time playing with their child than before.

**Read the report:** [The power of play \(PDF\)](#)

## **Best evidence on impact of Covid-19 on pupil attainment**

### **Research examining the potential impact of school closures on the attainment gap**

- Summarises the research around the impact of changes to practice due to Covid-19 on pupil attainment. It is updated as new studies are published. This Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) page is useful to have as one of your [favourites](#) or sign up for updates to get the up to date changes.

## **For up to date information**

[COVID-19 Gov guidance](#)

[E-newsletter](#)

[Facebook](#)

[OSCB](#)