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A message to School SENCOs from the Social Communication and Autism Team during the Covid-19 pandemic

This message is for mainstream school SENCOs who have on roll a child with either a diagnosis of Autism or a Social Communication need who were being supported by the Social Communication and Autism team (Davinia Hammersley, Miriam Price, Louise Bieluch) prior to the lockdown/ school closures.

- Parents of children with autism are likely to be concerned for the health and wellbeing of their child with autism as well as the needs of the rest of the family during the current pandemic. Please consider contacting them to find out how they are coping and whether the child is able to access home learning at all. Agree a review date to call again to check again how it's going.
- Some families will find the physical demands of caring for their child with autism at home 24-7 extremely challenging particularly if they are the sole carer, if they are looking after other children, working from home, are self-isolating or unwell. Shopping for essentials and getting hold of medicines may be very difficult. Please consider ringing them to check they have the help they need.
- Families with children who are not accessing home learning due to their child's rigidity or refusal to accept home as a place of work may feel anxious or stressed that their child will fall behind with their school work. Families may not want to enforce home schooling as it might cause a meltdown which puts the child and other members of the family in the home at risk. Please consider how you support these parents with providing a structure for the family and possibly a visual timetable. Links to online learning are being sent out which might encourage the child to take part in structured sessions which appear as more fun. BBC bitesize have introduced daily learning sessions for children from Reception to Year 10.



- Children with autism may find it difficult to process the vast amounts of information about the virus and may have additional anxiety if they are prone to catastrophising (imagining, expecting and focusing on the worst). Please consider supporting these families with social stories about the virus using the links we have sent.

If you have any concerns or queries about a child with a social communication need or autism in your school you can contact the team by email or by phone as we are still working remotely, alternatively contact us on stepsadmin@derby.gov.uk or 01332 641400.