



OVERVIEW

During the uncertain time of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to take the time to ensure that children and young people's wellbeing is nurtured and that their views and wishes are heard and considered.

There are a variety of ways in which we can be more child centred in our approach. The Institute of Child Protection Studies has developed a series of resources for all adults who support children and young people based on the Kids Central Toolkit.

The series includes an overview and a range of tip sheets based on the Kids Central principles.

Find these tip sheets on the [Safeguarding Children and Young People Portal](#)



Principle 3: My Family is Special during COVID-19

Children and young people are usually best supported within their families. Respectful relationships within and with families promotes safety.

Families are so very important during these uncertain times for children and young people. More than any other group, families provide them with:

- a sense of belonging based on bonds of love and support
- connections with the broader community
- a foundation from which to grow and develop through positive attachment
- a place to develop proactive problem-solving skills
- clear boundaries and expectations.

Many families are experiencing multiple challenges all at once at the moment, such as:

- physical ill health and/or mental health issues
- alcohol and other drug concerns
- domestic and family violence
- poverty
- insecure work or unemployment
- insecure housing.

Children and young people are often aware of all of these challenges and often feel responsible for some or all of the issues affecting their families. But they struggle with their own challenges too such as:

- not being able to go to their favourite parks
- not seeing their friends at school
- not getting a hug from a grandparent or an extended family member.

These issues are compounded when families have limited access to services that offer intensive support. Children and young people need to be reassured by their parents, carers or workers that they are not to blame.

Families respond well when support is built on their strengths and when they are linked to services and resources that help them face their current challenges. It is important to note that children and young people will have their own strengths and individual support needs within the family unit. It is paramount to identify, hear and acknowledge these as well.

Activity 1: Our strengths

Use this activity to identify and celebrate strengths, plan ways to build on strengths, and get a sense of hope for the future.



Click on the page icon above to access the activity.

Activity 2: Sentence stems

Use this activity to talk about a range of experiences, including difficult ones, and provide an opportunity to listen to each others' perspectives on everyone's needs, problems, strengths and hopes.



Click on the page icon above to access the activity.

How can I support families?

See challenges as opportunities. This time of COVID-19 has revealed that every family can be vulnerable, but each family has unique strengths too. You can support families to use their own internal skills and capabilities to overcome challenges. Working with children and young people to identify their strengths can be part of that process (see Activity 1).

Do with, not to or for. Families need workers who are able to help identify the difficulties they are experiencing and link them to appropriate resources such as financial, psychological, educational or medical. This empowers families to identify and select the best solutions for their own problems.

Help reveal strengths and opportunities. During periods of uncertainty, families sometimes find it difficult to utilise some of their strengths and resources. Constantly affirming these, particularly acknowledging 'positive parenting' can help families build esteem and confidence.

Celebrate the small things. During this hard time for everyone, families can try to celebrate the small things, such as someone's sense of humour, baking skills, musical talents or love of creating stories and celebrate their ability to work together.

Celebrate growth. Families can grow through the difficulties they endure. This time has created so many issues and concerns for us all, it has also hopefully created moments to stop and reflect. Children tell us that they are proud of their parents and are heartened by the ways in which they have overcome adversity. It is important to share these moments and to celebrate them as a family.

Connect. Support children and young people to try new and alternative ways to connect and celebrate with family, extended family and/or friends (who they may see as their family) with activities, such as:

- letters and emails with photos
- cards
- drive by visits
- social media platforms (as a way of making contact)
- videos
- stories.

There are so many new and exciting ways that people all around the world are connecting and discovering innovative ways to maintain contact.

For children and young people, there are so many ways to support their connections with whatever type of family they find themselves in, whether it is biological, adopted, combined, separated, foster or extended. Remember, no matter what shape or size, every family is special!

