

Guide to working from home with your family



Home schooling – give yourself a break

A recent article in the Newbury Weekly news struck a chord with the situation that parents have been thrown into with regards to home schooling. The headline says it all, and the article itself is packed with the kind of understanding and reassurance, Hermitage Primary School teacher Ingrid Gardner starts by saying ‘You probably aren’t a teacher and there is no expectation for you to become one, give yourself a break’.

Wise words, possibly not so easy to heed when parents are feeling the extreme pressure to support their children’s education.

She acknowledges that although the internet has been flooded with lesson plans, free downloads, suggested websites and online learning platforms, some parents may find this overwhelming.

She also signs off with the sweetest takeaway, something we all know to be true, if we are able to give ourselves a moment to make it so.

“Time is precious and because of COVID-19, we have been given the gift of time and being together. It will not always be easy, but when you look back on this and it is all a distant memory you will be glad that you have some happy memories.”

Read the [full article](#) and Mrs Gardner’s top tips for home schooling.



Balancing remote working and childcare

It's a juggling act to say the least...

We've suddenly had to change our working culture and physical ways of working. We're rising to that challenge and adapting brilliantly by embracing the new ways of working on offer. Zoom is now not a reference to a retro ice lolly, but the tool that keeps us all visually connected and able to communicate as efficiently as if we were together in a meeting room. On a social level, House Party drinks has replaced the Friday evening swifty with colleagues at the pub.



The digital way of communicating is already becoming second nature, even to those of us who were not so immersed prior to the Covid crisis. But, add to this, that a significant number of us are now working from home alongside our families and children. This brings a different set of challenges to overcome. Keeping kids occupied has never been easy, and now we not only need to keep them engaged and entertained, but we must take on many aspects of education too.

The good news is that there has never been more varied and accessible help available online. Here's a great example;

Recognising the difficulties that parents face when balancing remote working and childcare, CGI, one of the world's largest information technology (IT) and management consulting firms has adapted its STEM Camps Programme to meet the needs of the current crisis.



CGI usually run Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) camps across the UK in partnership with local schools and community groups, but have now gone virtual and are offering a range of downloadable resources for remote learning. The STEM from Home programme releases weekly STEM based activity packs for children aged 6 – 14.

All activities can be completed from home, with no need for additional resources. Weekly packs include one technical activity, one practical activity and one physical activity. Ensuring there is content for a range of abilities and interests.

The first four packs (coding & design, robotics, helping the environment and sport and healthy living) are now available on the [CGI website](#), with topics such as engineering, space and communication still to come.

The activity packs are released on the [CGI website](#) on Wednesday afternoons, with notifications and links shared via [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).

You can post your best pictures of the activities and competitions on the above channels using **#STEMfromHome** and **#ExperienceCGI** and they will share those more widely.

Family Life during lockdown

You may be feeling stressed as you try to balance work, childcare and self-care while dealing with worries – both your children’s and your own. In recognition of this, the NHS and Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group have put together some of the best reliable and free sources of information and advice to help you and your family to cope under lockdown. See following pages.

This Government guide to [‘What parents and carers need to know about schools and education during the coronavirus outbreak’](#) may also be helpful. It contains information for parents and carers about educational provision for critical workers, school closures, exams, free schools meals and home schooling.





Over the past few weeks, the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis has brought a lot of sudden changes for families with children. Parenting can be very rewarding. However, in these uncertain and challenging times you may be feeling stressed as you try to balance work, childcare and self-care while dealing with worries – both your children's and your own. In recognition of this, we have put together some of the best reliable and free sources of information and advice to help you and your family to cope under lockdown.

Five ways to wellbeing

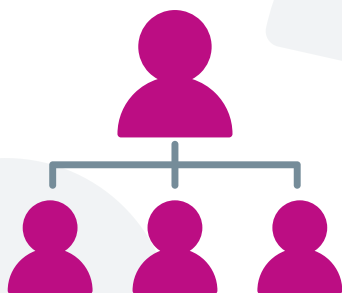
#Coping

Best for advice to support family life during the COVID-19 pandemic



NSPCC click here	Tips and advice to support you and your family – whether you want to try something new today or just start thinking about changes you could make over the coming weeks.
Family Lives click here	Advice on coping during the outbreak, both practically and emotionally.
Relate click here	Blogs, advice and tips for helping your relationships to stay healthy.

Best for parenting tips



Family Lives – Parents Together Online click here	Online parenting course in six interactive blocks filled with techniques and ideas to help you become a more confident and happier parent.
Parent TV channel	The website also has a range of short videos with instant parenting tips on Family Lives' Parentchannel.tv.
Mind Ed for Families click here	Written by experts and parents together, this provides materials for parents and carers of children and teens struggling with mental health issues.

Young people's guide

#Coping

For further help and support the [Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership website](#) has a dedicated information page for children and their families.

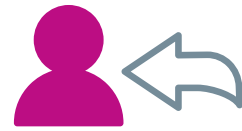
Online safety – As a parent or carer you play a key role in helping your child stay safe online. See www.saferinternet.org.uk and www.thinkuknow.co.uk for more information.

Also available

Best for support from other parents

Family Lives forum
[click here](#)

Family Lives forums are a safe space for families to share dilemmas, experiences and issues with others who understand the ups and downs of family life.



Best for helping your child or young person with their mental health during the COVID-19 outbreak

Public Health England –
Guidance on supporting
children and young people’s
mental health and wellbeing
[click here](#)

Advice for parents and carers on how to look after the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people of all ages during the pandemic.

YoungMinds
[click here](#)

Tips, advice and where to get support for your child’s mental health during the COVID-19 crisis.

Anna Freud Centre
[Videos](#)

Separate videos for young people and for parents/carers provide targeted advice and guidance on dealing with the disruption caused by the coronavirus.

[Self-care resources](#)

Simple self-care resources also available.

[Childline:](#)
[Coronavirus advice](#)

Information about the coronavirus and simple tips and advice to help children cope during the lockdown.

[Calm Zone](#)

Help children to overcome stress and anxiety.

Partnership for Children
[click here](#)

Online resources include resilience-building activities to help children to deal with change and uncertainty during the coronavirus pandemic.



Best for ideas and activities to keep children busy and entertained

HomeStart
[click here](#)

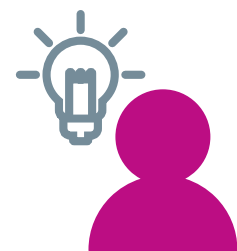
Great practical ideas for activities to do with children of all ages if you’re self-isolating or practicing social distancing.

Chatterpack
[click here](#)

A list of free online boredom-busting resources.

DfE Guidance: Online
[educational resources](#) for home
education

A wide range of support and resources for children and young people of all ages. Includes a section on wellbeing.



Best for your own wellbeing



Mind click here	Lots of advice to support your wellbeing.
Talking Therapies Silver Cloud online	A free NHS service for anyone aged 17+ within Berkshire who may be struggling with stress, sleep issues, low mood and anxiety.
Public Health England – Guidance on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of COVID-19 click here	Advice and information on how to look after your mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Includes a full guide and an easy read version.
Every Mind Matters click here	Expert advice from the NHS and Public Health England to help you look after your mental health and wellbeing.

Best for if you feel you need more help



Family Lives helpline 0808 800 2222 click here	Free and confidential national helpline service for families. Offers emotional support, information, advice and guidance on any aspect of parenting and family life. Open: Monday - Friday 9am - 9pm and Saturday and Sunday 10am - 3pm
YoungMinds parents' helpline 0808 802 5544 click here	Free and confidential national helpline. Offers advice to parents/carers worried about a child or young person under 25 years old. Advice on a child's behaviour, emotional wellbeing or mental health condition. Open: Monday - Friday 9.30am - 4pm

Family Information Services provide FREE impartial information and guidance about a wide range of services for children, young people and their families.

Click on your area for more information.

[Reading](#)

[West Berkshire](#)

[Wokingham](#)



Also available

#Coping

Young people's guide

#Coping

Five ways to wellbeing

How to thrive (and survive) working from home with your children

It's hard having to be both your best self professionally and a super parent and partner 24/7. Normally, we get time out from our partners and children, but currently, we're all inhabiting the same space at one time, all the time.

Luckily, the entertainment offer for children (and adults) at home is growing day on day.

Here's a small selection to keep the kids happily occupied and learning so you can keep calm and carry on working.

On the home school front, [BBC Bitesize](#) is a great place to start. They're providing three new lessons every weekday for primary, secondary and post 16 kids with videos, podcasts and activities.

[Here's a guide](#) to everything they're doing to help young people study at home

Every house has a small (or large) budding Strictly Come Dancing contestant. So let them 'keep dancing' along with Oti Mabuse. Oti has [youtube dance classes](#), weekdays at 11.30am.



No need to worry about keeping kids (and you) in shape when they can't get to the park. Fitness guru Joe Wicks has it covered. Check out his [classes on youtube](#), weekdays at 9am.

Don't forget that your own body is also a temple. If you need to take a breather, yoga is a great way to keep your stress levels down and keep your body and mind strong. There are so many online classes to get you started. [Yoga with Adriene](#) (and her dog Benjy!) has something yogis at all levels. And breathe...



The guys at Get Berkshire Active have concocted the [Mayathon challenge](#) to help us be active, stay well and support our friends. The challenge is to complete an unbroken streak of 26 minutes of exercise a day for 26 days, virtually with a friend, family or colleague, starting 1 May. It can be any activity and any intensity - it's not about how far or how fast. The aim is be active, stay well and support a friend while we're at home. The number 26 is because it's the number of miles in a marathon. The finish line is 26 May.



Use the free [mayathon app](#) to help you buddy-up (and see your buddy's!) log your activity, track your mood, and easily access free playlists and work-out videos.

The links below also have great tips.

[Activity ideas for kids during self isolation](#)

[Kids nature activities during self isolation](#)

Healthy home workstation guide

Most of us aren't used to working from home every day as we're all getting used to new ways of working during the current crisis. Homeworking full time is a big step change and one that can affect our physical and mental health.

At work, we have access to office chairs, raised desktop computers, and workplace desk assessments. At home, it's all a bit more 'DIY'. The majority of homeworkers tend to use a laptop computer. The screen is lower so they have to look down rather than look forward at a desktop screen. Makeshift desks or sitting at kitchen tables cause further problems as the set up hasn't been designed for use as a desk.

However, simply making some improvements to our home work station set up can improve our posture, which helps us to breathe properly which helps us to concentrate, reduces aches and pains and keeps our energy levels up.

Here's some recommendations from colleagues in the council's Health & Safety, HR and Public Health teams, to help you create comfortable working conditions at home.

Start with a self-assessment

Completing a [Display Screen Equipment \(DSE\) Self-Assessment](#) will ensure you complete a review of your workstation at home and help you highlight any adjustments you need to make.



Workstation

Ensure it is correctly set up in the following way to enable you to reduce strain on your body and to maintain a neutral spine posture:

- The screen should be directly in front of you with the top of the screen level with your eye brows – this will ensure a neutral neck position which will help manage any upper back and neck discomfort (even a slight tilt of the neck up or down can contribute to discomfort),
- The key board should be tilt-able, directly in front of you and at least 5cm back from the edge of the desk to give room to wrest your wrists – this ensures support for the upper spine and the mouse should be positioned to ensure no persistent over reaching to use it.
- If you are using a laptop at home you should obtain an external keyboard and mouse to ensure you can correctly set up the workstation. Staff can use work station equipment from their usual council office when working from home during this period of social isolation measures. If you'd like to take up this option, please discuss with your line manager.
- You may also want to consider purchasing a laptop riser to allow the laptop screen to be set at the correct height. Before purchasing any new equipment for your home workstation, discuss this with your line manager.
- Ensure you have the sufficient natural or artificial light and that a comfortable temperature is maintained around your workspace.



Chair

The height setting of your seat is the key to a neutral spine. If you have an adjustable chair, ensure that

- Your arms are at a comfortable right angle to the desk when sitting with the hands resting on the keyboard- any over or under reach will either mean you overstretch your shoulders or bunch them which can cause discomfort.
- Your spine is in comfortable contact with the chair back whilst not allowing the seat to dig into the backs of your knees.
- The seat back is in the correct position to allow the lumbar support to fit into your lumbar spine (if present/applicable).
- The seat tilt position is correctly set (if present/applicable) to provide either a completely level hip/thigh position or a very slight downward slant for your thighs (this can encourage you to sit up in the correct position).

If you don't have access to an adjustable chair

- Sit on a chair that is comfortable (place a cushion under your bottom), sit your bottom right to the back of your chair,
- Place a small rolled-up towel in the small of your back to help lift your lumbar spine.
- External lumbar supports can be purchased to place on your home working chair should you require it. Again, discuss with your line manager if you are considering purchasing a lumbar support.

Take a Break

- Ensure you take two short breaks from your home workstation per hour. One or two minutes each time is fine – just ensure you stand and move away from the workstation to give your body a complete change of position. On the following page are some suggested stretches.
-

Computer and Desk Stretches

Approximately 4 Minutes

Sitting at a computer for long periods often causes neck and shoulder stiffness and occasionally lower back pain. Do these stretches every hour or so throughout the day, or whenever you feel stiff. Photocopy this and keep it in a drawer. Also, be sure to get up and walk around the office whenever you think of it. You'll feel better!



10-20 seconds
2 times



10-15 seconds



8-10 seconds
each side



15-20 seconds



3-5 seconds
3 times



10-12 seconds
each arm



10 seconds



10 seconds



8-10 seconds
each side



8-10 seconds
each side



10-15 seconds
2 times



Shake out hands
8-10 seconds