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Safety Rocks

Working together to keep children safe

★ Parent & Carer Newsletter ★ Summer 2020

Family life during Covid-19

★ In this edition we are focusing on family life during the Covid-19 crisis. We all know that life during lockdown has been a challenging time for individuals and families as we all adjust to a completely new 'normal'...

For some there have been benefits, like more time to spend with your children, no long commute to work, better work/life balance. But for many there are some real challenges like, spending more time with your children, trying to juggle work and children's schooling, not to mention those who are worried about loved ones they can't visit, financial difficulties and the looming threat of the virus.

Family relationships, which have their ups and downs at the best of times, can feel even more difficult to manage when everyone is together almost 24/7 and of course for parents who are separating or separated this can be even more challenging.

Everyone is trying to cope in their own way, for some this might be taking up yoga, learning French, or taking up baking, but for many of us it might just be finding ways of getting through the day.

In this edition we talk to some parents about how they have coped, signpost you to some local and national support organisations and give you a suggested list of resources. We also know that we are all starting to suffer from information overload, so we have tried to keep it simple!

★ Whatever your family situation we hope there is something here for you and we would love to hear from you with your stories at newsletter@safety-net.org.uk

★ Support for Families Under Pressure

We are loving these videos brought to you by the Maudsley Clinic to help families cope during this stressful and cooped up time when the pressure of parenting can get you down. These short videos are voiced by some well-known actors and TV presenters including Alex Jones and David Harewood. These short videos cover topics like: "How to communicate better with your child"; "Helping your child to manage anxiety"; "Helping your child manage negative feelings" and "Boosting positive emotions".

Click [here](#) to view them...



★ StarLine – a government website for home learning, advice and support for parents and carers

Most secondary and primary aged children may have set work provided by their school or they may be accessing work online. Parents have told us that becoming their child's teacher has been a daunting prospect but talking to other parents who are going through similar experiences can be helpful. The Government have introduced a helpline called Starline that helps parents and carers with expert advice and information on all aspects of home learning. Visit www.starline.org.uk or call 0330 313 9162.



★ Life during lockdown: parent stories

★ We asked some of the parents we are in contact with to tell us about family life in lockdown....

"We've definitely had our ups and downs since lockdown. Some days seem simple; the boys get on with the schoolwork they've been set, get great feedback from their teachers, I get loads of work done. Other days are a write off, and we're all grumpy with each other and unproductive. But every evening, even when we've had a rotten day, we sit down together and watch something we all like on telly. The Cube, maybe, or The Next Step, or The Great British Sewing Bee. It doesn't matter what, we're all relaxed and happy and have an hour of really enjoying each other's company.

"The thing that's been hardest for the children is missing their friends. The nine year-old just misses having other nine year olds to play with. We decided early on in lockdown to give him an old smart phone. I still don't know if this was the right thing to do - he's two years' younger than I would have liked, but it has been so brilliant for him to be able to video call his friends, daily. And I never thought I'd say it but video games are a life-changer, especially when he can play against his friends.

"The 13 year-old is at an age when he just wants to start being a bit more independent. We've allowed him to go out on his bike on his own, and he and a friend have been creating a mountain bike trail in the local park. They don't meet; they work on their own and then find it really exciting when they see the other has been there and upgraded one of the jumps. Then they make short videos of what they've done.

"I learnt the hard way that just letting them get on with schoolwork without any input was not a good idea. There's a reason why children have teachers and aren't just expected to learn from video clips and reading. We really can't expect them to stay self-motivated, the subjects need to be brought alive. And when we've got work pressures it's not always possible to do that. I would imagine most families have had to lower their expectations of what will be learnt during this period."

If I could go back to March and talk to myself with hindsight, my advice would be...

- ★ Video games and smart phones are essential for socialising, so loosen up the rules on screens. It's not worth the battle. However, keep the parental controls on so the only thing you're worrying about is screen time, not content.
- ★ Teenagers don't always want your help, no matter how frustrating it is to watch.
- ★ We're up and down as adults, so we can't expect our children to be anything else.
- ★ Don't feel intimidated by the great projects others are putting on social media. Usually, people only post a photo of the 5 minutes in the day when something went right.
- ★ Baking can be maths, science, PSHE, geography and sociology; dance is PE and music! That's eight subjects covered.



★ Things that have worked...

- ★ **Online lessons** with their aunty in Manchester - usually art, or literacy
- ★ **Camping out** in the garden, watching the satellites and meteor showers.
- ★ **Cooking** together
- ★ **Trampoline** breaks



★ Family life in lockdown: parent stories

My son talks about the virus like it's an idiotic person he would like to give a piece of his mind...

★ **In almost every family I've spoken to**, it's become apparent that the anxiety and the struggle to adapt to quarantine is greater for the parents than the children! Obviously families with serious issues like domestic violence and poverty may have a different view, and I don't minimise how tough it is for all families.

★ **Like adults, the children have ups and downs**, but in some ways quarantine has been a good demonstration of their innate resilience, and the fact that often, being in their safe space with their safe adults is enough to keep them stable. I have noticed that parents when asked, say things like "... actually, they seem quite okay." with a note of surprise in their voices. As parents we are pretty petrified about the world, the virus, our jobs, sick or distant loved ones, the future, our children's wellbeing & education etc. etc. etc. but maybe children, certainly younger ones, are often more concerned with what is right in front of them, and if that is the environment in which they feel most safe, they might cope pretty well.

★ **As a mum of a teen and a tween**: neither of them get up before 10.30/11ish, which is fine, and I get my morning in peace, but the flip side is they don't go to bed until I'm half dead myself, meaning no adult time and no access to my TV choices!

★ **The Year 11 was initially extremely anxious** and confused about cancellation of exams and the implications. We felt desperately sorry for her filing away the piles and piles of revision notes, and her and her friends felt utterly lost. One of her mates told me "I feel like someone has removed the horizon, I just don't know what my function is now". They had 50 minutes notice to leave the school, their teachers, each other, and say goodbye to their celebration assemblies, prom, yearbooks, parties, and now potentially their summer.

★ **They had booked for gigs, festivals, holidays, all cancelled now**. I have found this all heart-breaking, and there has been some teen ranting, "you adults all told us this would be the best summer of our lives!", but overall she has coped pretty well I think. There is some anxiety about transition to college, without the 'live' support of teachers and friends in person. However, she's now in a luxurious routine of late start, workout, huge breakfast, epic shower/wardrobe consultation, then hours of reading, cooking, Netflix, WhatsApp, walks. It's like she lives in a spa, except it's lonely at times, and could go on for months, so the novelty will definitely wear off.

★ **The 12-year-old is more subdued**. He is not overly worried about the virus etc. he talks about it like it's an idiotic person he'd like to give a piece of his mind. He is just fed up he can't see friends, and weirdly - go shopping! I have found it heart rending watching him slaving away at his home schooling on his own. He's got a lot of positive feedback, but this is not having much of an effect any more. I'm worried that his social development will be slightly set back by this experience, and after all this time off, going back in year 8 will feel like starting secondary school all over again. I have been struck by how much we are creatures of habit. A routine will form, even if it's unrecognisable from the 'normal' one.



How is lockdown affecting family life? Sussex University research

Families with school age children are being asked to take part in research for the University of Sussex. A team of psychologists are investigating how family life and wellbeing are being affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The team is asking parents and guardians of primary school age children to complete an online survey to help them track the impact of the pandemic on families.

Dr Lester, an expert in child psychology at the University of Sussex, said: "With the entire nation in lockdown, families across the UK are adjusting to a dramatically different way of life. Children are no longer at school, parents are learning how to home-school, and many are also simultaneously working from home.

"As well as worries for the health of loved ones, this situation presents parents with a perfect storm. And for children, the rupture to their daily routines, and their contact with their friends, has been radical.

"We hope that this study will give us an important insight into the emotional and social impact of the Covid-19 restrictions on families with young children. We would like as many parents and guardians with primary school age children (4-11 years) as possible to take part."

Families who decide to take part will be asked to complete an online questionnaire now and at three-weekly intervals until Covid-19 restrictions are no longer in place. Participants will be asked about their family and household; parents and child emotional wellbeing; and their relationships with family and friends.

All participants who return completed questionnaires will be eligible for a prize draw with the chance to win £100, £50 and £25 vouchers.

The results will be written into a scientific report.

★ **[Click here to take part in the survey.](#)**

Note: We have not been able to confirm whether the survey is still looking for participants.



★ Mindful Month with Smiling Mind

"Mindfulness means knowing what is going on inside and outside ourselves moment by moment" says Professor Mark Williams of the Oxford Mindfulness Centre. It is also scientifically proven to help us improve our mental wellbeing.

Smiling Mind is a not for profit organization that has loads of free mindfulness resources for adults and children to help you and your family get started and practice a bit of mindfulness daily. The app is free to download and everything on it is FREE.

Mindful Month with Smiling Mind is a new project taking place in June and is a FREE, in app month long movement to help you start developing a routine to look after your mental health.

For more information, visit
www.smilingmind.com.au





Local Services

Raising Teenagers: Make Good Trouble

Make Good Trouble is a local organisation. They say: "As our name suggests, Make (Good) Trouble is a social disruptor. We exist to challenge existing norms and change entrenched ways of doing things. Our work is centred around young people's emotional wellbeing and everything we make is developed through the eyes of the child. We actively encourage teens to think differently, to understand that they have the capacity to redesign their thinking processes and challenge and change attitudes."

LATEST: If you're a parent or a young person struggling to cope, or just worried about the next few weeks and months, we've set up a Facebook group to help you. It's called **Raising Teens in Lockdown** ([click here to visit the page](#)) (what else!). We've gathered some of our Raising Teens experts to give advice and you can also share your own ideas and tips or simply have somewhere to talk and be heard. And we have our small army of amazing Make (Good) Trouble teens on hand to help out.

We're planning Q&A advice sessions, cook-alongs, home-based activities and more – our teens are brainstorming ideas as I type! We'll be trialling and sharing the best ways to keep in touch with friends and family – which apps and digital media work best, including which are free – so no one feels alone.

Raising Teens is back for a third series on BBC Radio Sussex and Surrey – and, for the first time, on other BBC stations around the country. This

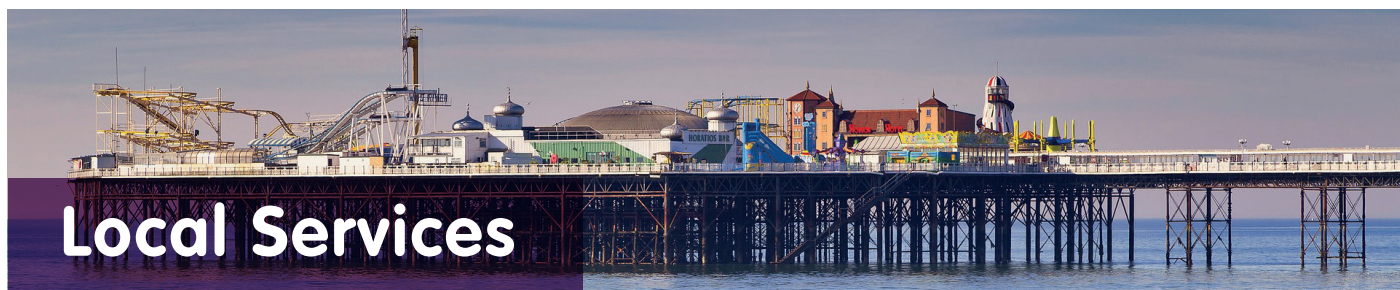
special series focuses on lockdown and the pandemic. **Host Guy Lloyd** and **teen reporter Lola Ray** are back for series three. The first episode focuses on **anxiety and how this pandemic is affecting teens** and their families.

You can hear Raising Teens on **BBC Radio Sussex** and Surrey at **7.30pm on Mondays and Wednesdays** and online on BBC Sounds at www.makegoodtrouble.co.uk

We are also liking this handy guide for teens: **Teen Guide to Surviving the Lockdown**. If you haven't seen a copy yet then [check it out here](#). It may also have some handy hints for parents too.

Online Safety: For advice on online safety at the moment, www.thinkuknow.co.uk are doing weekly activity packs per age group to keep parents aware and confident.





Local Services

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Women Supporting Women
Helpline

Mondays 2 - 4p.m. (50+Specific) -
07463288007

Wednesdays 2 - 4p.m. - 07851247753 /
07472085374

Thursdays 10a.m. - 12p.m. 07851247753
/ 07472085374

Email:

dropinservices@womenscentre.org.uk

Support

Advice

Connection

In Confidence

BWC

Brighton Women's Centre
Empowering women since 1974
womenscentre.org.uk

The Schools Wellbeing Service and Safety Net

This service is part of the Brighton and Hove Inclusion and Support Service and Safety Net is one of the local charities who work in partnership with them to support children, young people, families and schools around children's mental health and wellbeing.

They have produced two really useful documents for children - click the links below to view:

- <https://www.safety-net.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/mychangingworld-parents-covid19-2.pdf>
- www.safety-net.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Daily-Wellbeing-Activities-Part-2.pdf

In case you missed it, here is a link to **Safety Net's E-Zine for children aged 8-13**: <https://www.safety-net.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/e-zine-Issue-1-Worries.pdf>



**Brighton & Hove
BHSCP
Safeguarding
Children Partnership**

**Help us to keep our children *safe*
in Brighton & Hove**

**If you see
something ...
say something!**

Are you concerned about a child or family?
If you **see** or hear something that worries you ...
say something!
Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Please call the council's children's services on 01273 290400
to report a child safeguarding concern.
In an emergency call 999.



During lockdown some children will be in very vulnerable positions and may not be in contact with services who can help them. If you are concerned about a child in your street, neighbourhood, or family please do contact **Front Door for Families** so that they can get the help and support that they need. More details are in the ad above, or call **01273 290400**.

Amaze, a local charity supporting families who have children and young people with disabilities in Sussex, has expanded its Lockdown content with a '**Leisure, Learning and Lockdown**' page on the Compass Card website with guides for families, young people and parent carers plus an online gallery for crisis creatives. Although it's written for parent carers and disabled young people, much of the content is suitable for everyone. You'll find it here: www.compasscard.org.uk/leisure-learning-and-lockdown/

Useful national resources

The NSPCC has released figures this week (11/05/2020) which show that the number of adults contacting the NSPCC Helpline about parental mental health increased by 28% from the first to the third week of lockdown during the coronavirus crisis. Safety Net want to share with all our parents some links that we recommend and that might be helpful to you at this time.

★ For all families

East Berkshire NHS has put together a really useful guide for families on coping with the challenges of family life during Lockdown. They say: "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." [You can visit it by clicking here.](#)

Family Lives also has lots of tips and information for coping practically and emotionally with family life during lockdown. [Click here to view it.](#)

★ For separated parents

Cafcass has produced guidance for separated parents on effective co-parenting and child arrangements during Covid-19. [Click here to see it.](#)

★ Parents living in a difficult situation

Young Minds has tips for parents living in a difficult situation during Lockdown - [click here to view.](#)

Barnardos has tips and information for how to cope with family conflict during lockdown - [click here to see it.](#)

★ Domestic abuse

However, if you are experiencing domestic abuse then contact the police or your local domestic abuse service like **RISE** in Brighton and Hove. If you need their support you can still ring their helpline 9–5 Monday – Friday on **01273 622 828**. Out of hours please call the 24 hour **National Domestic Violence helpline** on **0808 2000 247**. You are not alone.

★ Mental Health

- www.nspcc.org.uk - the NSPCC themselves have a section on supporting parents mental health during lockdown
- www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression - advice and tips, self-assessment, signposting.
- www.mindcharity.co.uk - are doing a weekly update newsletter with info and tips on keeping well at this time



★ We would love to hear from you!

If you have a question, suggestion or article, please email us at newsletter@safety-net.org.uk.