

Talking to children and young people about coronavirus: A suggested model

Please note: The model below has been designed in order to apply to children and young people attending early years, school and college settings. As a result, the guidance provided within this model will need to be differentiated/applied accounting for the child or young person's age and/or level of understanding.

Invite a discussion

- For younger children: If the child is unlikely to have heard about coronavirus, just remind them about good hygiene
- For older children/young people: Invite discussion using open ended questions (e.g. 'What have you heard about coronavirus?')
- Be led by the child/young person, and avoid introducing information that could trigger further anxiety.

Describe what is happening

- Use facts at an appropriate level
- Describe what has happened and what is happening now
- You could use videos or other props (e.g. [Newsround clips](#), websites such as the [Government webpage](#).)

Encourage questions/discussion

- Talk about what the news made them think and feel, and how other people appear to be feeling
- If talking to young people, discuss the media portrayal of the event.

Offer reassurance and containment

- Explain that coronavirus cases are still very rare, and that measures are in place to keep people as safe as possible
- Talk about how media coverage/social media can make coronavirus feel more of a threat than it is.

Reduce speculation (where age appropriate)

- Explain what speculation is and why it is unhelpful
- Give examples of speculation and fact
- Explain (where appropriate) how speculation can be heavily circulated via social media
- Point out when children/young people speculate and highlight what is known
- Encourage children/young people not to speculate.

Following up

- Remind children/young people who they can talk to if they feel worried
- Monitor children/young people who may be at particular risk of developing high anxiety
- Address marginalisation of ethnic minority groups according to school/setting policy.