

Dear teaching colleagues,

This is an invitation to take part in a Bradford wide project to mitigate the short and longer term impact of the pandemic/ lockdown on our children and young people's mental health - and the stress they and staff will experience on their return to 'ordinary' school life.

Research is indicating that Covid 19 is having a more significant adverse effect on younger people's emotional wellbeing, particularly our children from BAME backgrounds. I am witnessing this in my own children - low mood, tearfulness, sleep problems - and I am noting that the children I work with who have been attending school in some form are doing better emotionally than those who have stayed at home.

This two-part project uses artmaking to help children process the current situation and draws on the way people have sought to be collectively linked in order to lessen isolation - for example, painting rainbows and putting them in their window for others to see, joining in the Clap for Carers. There has been a resurgence of people making/ crafting/ baking since they've been confined to home. As a school you will no doubt have been finding ways for all pupils and families to feel connected.

This is a further opportunity for children to connect now - before this school year ends. It acknowledges we are all going through the pandemic together – but have very different individual experiences of it.

The Project

- Each week, teachers send their students (via whatever online means your school is using) the theme for their art making and an explanation of what to do.
- The children make a piece of art in response to that theme, and send a photo of what they have made back to their teacher. This should not include an identifiable photo of the child.
- At the end of the week, the teacher (or relevant technical person!) puts the images together into one combined class image which is shared with the members of that class.
- The children will be able to see their own image, look for those of their friends, and guess who made what. This will promote feelings of belonging, shared experience, and a sense of being seen and connected.

These are the themes for each week:

- **Hands** - We are always talking about washing our hands now, but we can no longer touch. Make/ photograph/ draw/ paint / print an image of your hands. You could draw round them and cut out or decorate, make a handprint, decorate gloves, write a message/ draw on your hands, take a photo or any other means you can think of. Send your image to your teacher who will put them together. Now we are holding hands.
- **Make a line** - the line stretches from one side of the screen to the other - this could be your arms, legs, something in your room (a football scarf for example), something you have made (a plait, a necklace, a daisy chain) and take a photo. When the images are put together the lines join up and are connected across every person in the class. We are all joined up.
- **Quilt**. Most of us are staying at home most of the time now. Can you make a square for the quilt that says 'home' to you? What colours will you use? What patterns? Will you draw, paint, sew, knit or take a photo of a special object (no people please!) in your home? Share it with your class teacher and it will form part of your class (or maybe even a school) quilt.

I hope you enjoy creating and connecting. Thank you. sarah.butcher@bdct.nhs.uk

