

## **BSL Zone Live stream: Coronavirus, Children and Education** English Translation by Helen Foulkes

**Presented by Fifi Garfield, with Martine Monksfield, Peripatetic Teacher  
and Lesley Reeves Costi, Co-Headteacher**

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**Fifi:** Welcome to the BSL Zone's Live Stream on Coronavirus. Today's topic will be on children and education. All three on the panel are connected remotely so we are not in the same room. On my right (left side on your screen) is Martine Monksfield, peripatetic teacher - hello!

**Martine:** Hi!

**Fifi:** On my left (right side on your screen) is Lesley Reeves-Costi, Co-Headteacher - hello to both!

**Lesley:** Hello!

**Fifi:** My name is Fifi Garfield and I will be facilitating this interview. I have a number of questions to start us off with, viewers can ask questions from 7.30pm by typing in the comments section for Martine and Lesley to respond to. There is also an additional third person involved, Clare Halliday who is doing her PhD research in microbiology, who you saw last week. She will try to respond to any questions to reassure viewers.

Let's start the questions! Hello everybody, how are you?

**Martine:** OK.

**Lesley:** Good, thank you.

**Fifi:** I am aware that parents are now responsible for teaching their children at home because schools and nurseries have closed due to the Coronavirus outbreak. Do parents have to teach every day? Who would like to answer this question? Martine?

**Martine:** The short answer is no. Teachers are not expecting parents to teach because parenting is a job in itself, teaching is a job in itself, working is another job in itself. Parents have to take on three jobs at home, this is impossible. Schools are aware of this, so they are not expecting parents to teach. Schools are expecting parents to keep their children safe at home as a first priority. This crisis situation that we find ourselves in is unique, so first priority is to keep children safe at home.

**Fifi:** Lesley, would you like to say something?

**Lesley:** The Government has announced that the National Curriculum has been put on hold due to this crisis, so children staying at home is the right thing to do as Martine mentioned. Schools will still send learning plans home. Learning can still happen at home, but it won't be the same as learning at school. Remember that your child is in the same situation as all children across the UK so don't panic thinking that your child will fall behind because every child is in the same situation.

The important thing is to have a daily routine where possible, for example it wouldn't be a good idea to have a lie in, try to get up at the usual time, have breakfast, get washed and dressed - this will help with mental wellbeing. Try to keep up a routine and in the mornings, have a look at what tasks the school has sent for your child. If your child understands what needs to be done to achieve those tasks, either independently or with support. Don't expect your child to learn all day, do each task at a time. We know that parents are busy yourselves and learning at home is not

easy. It is about setting up a daily routine with some learning. Children need lots of love and care at this moment in time, which is more important.

**Fifi:** Lesley, you mentioned try not sleep in, what about the upcoming Easter holidays? Should we carry on with this daily routine, or treat it like a holiday?

**Lesley:** For me, last weekend we had time off. Schools won't set tasks for weekends, and they won't set work for the Easter holidays. You can still switch off at weekends and during the Easter holidays. With regard to having lie ins, if you have teenagers, you need to be careful they don't lie in until 11am or 12! Teenagers' body clocks work differently to everyone else, but it won't help with mental wellbeing if we lie in in the mornings and stay up late at night, so try to have a better daily routine during the daytime, it is better for mental wellbeing to have some sunlight for vitamin D.

**Martine:** You need to find out what works best for your own family as all families are different. As Lesley said, some families have teenagers, some families have young children so the Easter holidays will be different for different families in their own individual situations.

**Fifi:** It will be challenging during the Easter holidays as most families go away, for example visiting a farm or visiting grandparents. Do you have any suggestions what families can do during the Easter holidays? Especially for parents who are working full time? Both of you are teachers so you will have time off, is that right? What about parents who do not have time off?

**Martine:** It can be difficult, like I said earlier, every family will be different. Those families who made plans for the Easter holidays will be disappointed that plans have to be cancelled. You can still plan for the holidays such as organising Easter egg hunts in your own garden, or if you have no garden, in the house. You can have a look online for virtual Easter egg hunts using FaceTime in which you send a map of your house or flat to another person who will use the map to give instructions within the house or flat to search for Easter eggs. Lots of children will be excited about doing Easter egg hunts. You can also FaceTime grandparents through the Easter holidays, why not make them cards or write letters to them, or send them video letters? A lot of grandparents are self-isolating so this will be a nice way to keep in touch with them during the Easter holidays.

**Fifi:** Thank you - another question - Teenagers are different to primary-aged children. Teenagers can be more independent to self-study, but younger children will need more supervision which can be difficult. Teenagers will want to go out of the house and be with their friends, how would you make teenagers stay at home?

**Lesley:** I would advise parents to explain the situation with their teenagers and make them understand what is going on and make them self-aware of their own responsibilities within society and their community. This is not easy, a tip is to get in touch with your teenagers' friends' parents and agree as a group that all parents will say "no" to teenagers going out. It will be easier if this is agreed as a group because if your teenager says "but my friend is going out" it can be difficult.

The more awareness teenagers have and the more understanding of the dangers there are out there, they need to understand that their actions does have consequences. If they understand this, they will have a better idea of their own responsibilities. Yesterday a 13-year old person passed away. Teenagers who think they are invincible and immune to the virus will be putting others at risk. The wider the virus spread, they will realise the risks.

**Martine:** Remind teenagers of the Government guidelines - you are not allowed to go out as a group or meet their friends, only allowed out with individuals from your own household. The police will tell you to go home, if they catch you out again, the police will fine you. Like Lesley said, it is important for parents to have conversations with their teenagers. Unfortunately, a lot of people

think it is ok for younger people to find out the facts for themselves. It is imperative for parents to have face-to-face conversations with their teenagers as it is so important.

**Fifi:** What about teenagers with additional needs? How would you deal with this?

**Lesley:** It can be difficult for any child with additional needs to learn at home, regardless of their age. It is about explaining as best as you can, using pictures. As I explained earlier, it is important to have a daily routine, and this is particularly important for any child with additional needs, as they will feel safer with a routine with boundaries, and knowing what to expect next in their daily routine. Their usual routine of going to school and being with friends and their teachers has disappeared and can be confusing. Use pictures or drawings to show what is happening through the day will give them a sense of control. It is definitely a difficult situation for children with additional needs.

**Martine:** It would be useful to sit down with them and create a visual timetable - some children are fine with words, others with additional needs will need pictures so that they can understand what is happening tomorrow and what order things are happening through the day. You can change the timetable if needed or give children the choice what activities to put on the timetable. For example, a bit of learning in the morning, then a free choice activity in the afternoon. Using a timetable and a routine will give a sense of control and make them feel safe.

**Fifi:** Next question, how do parents know that their children won't fall behind? What level of education should they be at? Some of us will be worried that they will fall behind.

**Martine:** When we all go back to school, whenever that will be, all teachers are trained for this. When you think about the time when children start school in reception year, we know that all children are at different levels. Teachers are trained to differentiate their teaching to meet different levels of children's abilities. So, this will apply when children return to school, teachers will probably be already thinking ahead how to differentiate and be ready for this.

**Lesley:** Schools are already thinking and planning on what the impacts will be for staff and parents when we return to school. To answer your question about whether children will fall behind, don't forget all children will be in the same situation. For parents who are concerned, I would advise that once the Easter holidays are over, just to focus on three things - reading, writing and maths. This doesn't mean for you to sit down with your children and teach them, this can be done through baking cakes, using maths to work out ingredients and reading instructions on how to make them. Playing games, think of communication activities that we can do with our children, in doing this children are actively learning. If you are concerned, your children's school will advise you as there will be different ways to bring in everyday learning.

**Fifi:** Thank you. Next question - for those children who are doing SATS, GCSEs and A-levels - will this be cancelled or postponed? Lesley?

**Lesley:** At this moment in time, the Government has stated that exams will not be happening this summer. Hopefully this Friday, OFQUAL will make an announcement how teachers will be giving grades. I feel that through the Easter holidays, teaching staff will understand what this will mean then after the Easter holidays, we will be in a better position to explain what will happen next. It will probably be a mixture of teacher assessments, results from previous mock exams and predicted grades. This will be passed to OFQUAL who may look at previous grades, for example GCSE results may be based on previous SATS results, and A-levels results may be based on previous GCSE results. I believe grades will be announced in July - the Government may change this decision after this Friday.

**Fifi:** Thank you. Another question - it seems a lot of children are using online resources compared to the past. How do we make sure that they are safe online?

**Martine:** Before this unique situation happened, all parents should have been taking responsibility for their children's online safety. This should have been a priority - schools have provided parents with information on how to make it safe online for their children. Obviously with this current situation, parents have a bigger responsibility with regard to online safety. For example, if your child is in a Zoom meeting with a teacher, make sure that someone is around in the same room to ensure that your child is not in a one-to-one situation.

**Fifi:** Also children shouldn't be using online resources in their bedroom?

**Martine:** That is correct - there should be an appropriate background and parents should be more proactive about online safety, especially now, where there could be more incidents compared to before.

**Fifi:** Lesley, would you like to say something?

**Lesley:** The internet is both beneficial and detrimental. Now that schools are closed, there are a lot of ideas, live streams and broadcasts, skills to develop online for us all to benefit from. You also need to be careful to check what is out there. One good example is Minecraft, which has recently launched 12 new educational lessons that you can join for free. Minecraft is good for maths and spatial awareness, planning and thinking strategies which is great advantage. At the same time, it can also be dangerous as well...

**Fifi:** It can be addictive...

**Lesley:** A lot of children are on their own with their parents, some of them cannot communicate effectively with their parents so they spend more time online signing with their friends which is good, but make sure that it is friends that they are communicating with online, not someone they don't know or haven't met. If it is a mutual friend of theirs, this is not ok. Especially for deaf children, if it is a deaf person they are communicating with online and they don't know this person, it is not ok. If you don't know this person, it can be dangerous. I would advise parents to check the history on computers and mobiles at the end of every day to check what your child has been doing and who they have been communicating with. It can be either adults or children who can be a danger to your child. If a child is saying horrible things in the playground, it is worse at home to say horrible things online because there is no face-to-face interaction. So parents need to check online activity all the time to ensure that they children are safe online. They may be safe staying at home from coronavirus but the world can invade the home online, so it is important to monitor online activity all the time.

**Martine:** I also think it is important to have a balance between working online and practical activities away from computers, tablets and mobile phones. For example, life skills - learning how to use the dishwasher and the washing machine as I am aware a lot of children don't know how to operate one and leave this to their parents. Learning life skills is important and this is a good time to develop life skills. Everyone is at home and there are lots of things you can do within the home - get everyone involved with the housework, it is essential to develop life skills.

**Fifi:** The longer we stay at home, the more opportunities we have to teach our children. We can sit and chill and get our children to do chores! (just joking!) Next question - if our children are worried, what can we do to reassure them?

**Lesley:** It is really important to be open with your children. It is not appropriate to say “don’t worry” and ignore it - children do know that there is something different going on, schools are closed, we can’t go to the park, we can’t go shopping and so on. It is important to open up and discuss with your children and let them ask questions. Answer their questions as best as you can. Children will learn things online and from their friends. For example, today my daughter told me that Boris Johnson said we won’t be going back to school until September but it was actually an April Fool’s Day trick! There is a lot of mis-information going around on the internet but I always refer them to BBC News for facts. It is best for parents to be open and honest and talk with their children and discuss their worries to reassure them. Let them know it is ok to be worried, a lot of us are worried about what is happening, both adults and children.

**Martine:** There are lots of pictorial information available online for younger children who may not understand what is going on. Use pictures to explain to them what is going on. Parents know their children well and what they will understand and what they won’t understand, what level their children function at, what words would be appropriate to use with their own children. My own hearing daughter won’t talk much but I know through her behaviour whether she is feeling stressed. She is hearing things around her, as a deaf person I can’t pick up the same information, so I have to have a direct conversation with my daughter and ask her if her tummy is hurting or has she been sick which may indicate that she is feeling worried and stressed.

**Fifi:** it could be related to anxiety?

**Martine:** Yes, it could be anxiety.

**Lesley:** I would like to add one more thing. Talking about children feeling safe, if a child is worried and feel they cannot talk to their parents, SignVideo has a list of direct links to organisations and one of them is Childline. Children can contact Childline through SignVideo website and can either sign or type comments through SignVideo interpreter to Childline, so they should feel reassured if needed.

**Fifi:** Perfect, thank you. Another question, some families cannot afford to feed their children, are there free meals available?

**Martine:** I think you can get £15 meal voucher per week...

**Fifi:** How would you get this meal voucher?

**Martine:** It depends on the schools, each school has their own arrangements. For children in receipt of free school meals, I would encourage the parents to contact the school and ask how they can get this voucher.

**Lesley:** Schools are still trying to work out their own systems, as it was the Government who announced that children should still receive free meals. Some schools post meal vouchers directly to families via post, others like my school attach meal vouchers to emails. Be careful as there are scams out there. If you receive something that offers you food but asks for your bank details this is a scam.

Yesterday, I believe that the Government stated that their food supplier Edenred will provide food vouchers to the schools so that they can in turn distribute to families who are entitled through free meals scheme. So, if your child is in receipt of free school meals, you will receive meal vouchers through the school to use through local shops. This will become a national scheme. If you usually pay for school meals, you will not receive this voucher. So, this scheme is only for those families who are already registered for free school meals.

**Fifi:** Thank you, we now have five minutes before the audience can ask questions so I will ask another question for the panel. I am worried, now that children are learning at home, what about those parents who don't have a good command of English, how do they teach English at home?

**Martine:** There are online resources to help teach English. I think there is a Facebook group focusing on home schooling for deaf parents who are BSL users, have a look at that. Like I said earlier, you need to ensure online safety and know what your children are doing and what information they are looking at online. There are a lot of resourceful tips on that group. Obviously it would depend on the age of your children, whether they are primary or secondary aged children.

My deaf husband works for a secondary school where they are still using Skype with their children. So, it is worth contacting your child's school and telling them that you don't feel confident using English and you would like the school to support this vulnerable area. Most schools will be happy to help because they want to ensure that the learning is continued. At the same time, don't stress yourself out, we are in a unique situation. If you are feeling stressed, you won't be in a position to teach your child and your child will pick up on parental stress. Your priority is to keep the children safe and happy, in a daily routine and make decisions on whether particular subjects are really urgent - do they need to know now, or can it be done later? Perhaps you can focus on a subject that you can practice on - like Lesley said earlier, focus on reading and writing. You can even practice BSL and develop this at home. It is all part of learning.

**Lesley:** Like Martine said earlier, learning at home should match the learning done at school. If you apply too high a level for the child to learn at home, it will be difficult. If you think there is a problem, contact the school and let them know and they will adapt the level. If there is an older sibling, you could ask for their support or ask your extended family like your cousin via FaceTime to show how the work can be done - all children will be at home. Communication is important so if parents are BSL users and their children are hearing, why not use BSL as a language to develop language skills?

**Fifi:** Thank you. One more question before we open to the audience. As we all know, 90% of deaf children are from hearing families, how can we reach out to those deaf children?

**Martine:** Just as like before the coronavirus outbreak started, peripatetic Teachers of the Deaf are already be in touch with all deaf children and we try to encourage deaf children attending mainstream school to attend Deaf events. A good example of more online presence during this time is that deaf children and young people will look for online resources and perhaps find BSL Zone and continue their link in the future! Perhaps this situation will be a good thing!

**Lesley:** Schools will be concerned about children who are BSL users themselves but whose parents signing skills are not so good. All schools have to undertake risk assessments for both deaf and hearing children with EHCP to ensure that those children are safe at home and can effectively communicate with their parents at home. If a child is vulnerable, the school has to put actions in place. For example, in my school, if we are aware of communication difficulties, we will video call the child every day to ensure that communication is happening. Other schools will be doing similar things. If there are any concerned viewers who are parents who feel that they are not getting the support from school, contact your SENCO Officer or your Teacher of the Deaf, both based in your Local Authority, as they have the responsibility to ensure that children have access to communication support. I really loved seeing Doncaster Trust setting up BSL lessons online which is a fantastic community initiative during this difficult time. Well done Doncaster!

**Martine:** I am aware that some council services vary from area to area. I am lucky that in my local area we have sign language instructors who offer Skype sessions with younger children and their families and I hope other areas will offer the same.

**Fifi:** Even during the Easter holidays?

**Martine:** Oh, I don't know, as it is usually time for a break.

**Lesley:** Schools have been asked to stay open during the Easter break if there are parents who are key workers and they need the support, so all schools will be different. Parents who are key workers of children from my school have said it is okay, they are sorted for the Easter holidays, so it really depends on your Local Authority and the school your child is attending. Find out what support is available.

**Fifi:** Now for the first question from the audience - from Rubbena Aurangzeb-Tariq - What support is there for deaf children/families with no or limited internet access to continue learning?

**Martine:** My husband's school had a similar problem with two families who didn't have laptops, the school provided the two families with a laptop - it is worth contacting the school who may be able to loan you a laptop. If there is no internet or broadband, that is a different matter. I would say use what you have at home, create your own projects, read books, create films on your mobile. Children will remember the fun memories you create, not spending hours on the laptop mindlessly. Creating happy fun memories and keeping safe is more important.

**Lesley:** If you don't have a printer at home, you can write out your work. Like Martine said, if there is no internet, no laptop, ask your school if you can borrow a laptop - communicate with your school and ask them what is possible. They could post work out to you; schools are trying their hardest to meet all their children's needs. A lot of teaching staff will also have their own children to look after at home or they may be self-isolating and can't leave the house. As a community, we are trying to ensure provision is there for everybody.

**Fifi:** Thank you. Another question from Damaris Cooke - Will coronavirus change education in the future? More online content, more assessments, less emphasis on exams etc?

**Martine:** I am not sure if education will change in the long term, but definitely during this current situation which has meant that everybody is in the same boat. Everyone is trying to utilise technology to support education at home. Some schools were already using technology well, others not as much so schools have had to adapt quicker more than others. When we return to school, I think there will be more use of technology, because everyone has been practising during this situation. In the past, we would be sent onto training courses to learn new technology, but right now we are all trying to learn fast, all of us at the same time.

**Lesley:** To respond to Damaris, for example, exams this year will be teacher-assessed. For a long time, teachers have been fighting for more teacher-assessments as we feel that this is more effective method to assess children, not exams where children crash-learn and are assessed for an hour - and that one hour affects the whole future of the child. There has been lots of discussions within teaching unions where we feel that teacher-assessments should be valued but this method is not used enough by the Government. So this year's SATS, GCSE and A-levels results may show better what children's achievements are as a whole child, rather than relying on one-hour intensive exams that may suit some children with exam situations and not others who are not suited for exams.

**Martine:** I think having more online content would be useful for vulnerable children who can't attend school, colleges or universities, for instance physically disabled children and young people. A lot of disabled organisations will be saying that they have been campaigning for years to universities to have online content so I think this situation will help with that.

**Fifi:** That is true. Next question from Nini Adams - What are the best ways to maintain focus and time management with homeschooling?

**Lesley:** Routine with regular times to wake up, have breakfast, get washed and dressed. Have short 30 minute-sessions, not three-hourly sessions. For example, do maths for 30 minutes then get up and move around physically to have a break, then perhaps do some writing. Remember in schools we don't expect children to be writing one task all day, we have different ways of learning, we write, we discuss as a group, we talk with peers. Learning can be very active. I would suggest that you have short sessions with a good daily routine to help with focus.

**Martine:** Maybe you have an area that your child needs to practise in, for example, my son needs to learn how to tie his shoelaces - make that your focus for the next two or three days. Then focus on a new area, for example handwriting. It depends on your child and what you think they need improvement in. Like I said earlier, life skills such as how to operate a washing machine so that they know how to use one when they go to university. Cooking is another life skill. Have a balanced approach between academic learning and life skills in the home that would be useful for the future.

**Lesley:** Sorry, one more response to Nini - to help with distance learning, mornings are usually better for more difficult subjects. In school we often have English and Maths in the mornings so we focus on those subjects and then in the afternoon more relaxing subjects such as playing games. For me, games, playing cards, you learn a lot of skills through playing games such as strategic thinking, maths, so use the afternoons for more relaxing activities.

**Martine:** I just want to say that games can become competitive which can lead to fights! But can create memories to film!

**Fifi:** It is healthy to be competitive! Next question from the audience - Mac Sinclair - Year 11 students are not taking GCSEs this year. What advice do you give about applying for college, apprenticeships or universities this September?

**Martine:** It is still the same process. Grades will be given regardless of exams being cancelled. It is still the same process. Talk with your students if they feel concerned or worried to reassure them that the process is still the same.

**Lesley:** I know that a lot of Year 11 students will feel frustrated that all their hard work was a waste of time and perhaps wonder what the point of studying is, feeling unfinished business. It is difficult, but for their mental wellbeing, it is important to keep active. We can divert their thinking to preparing CVs, preparing for college interviews, look at what courses they want to do next. Perhaps they can ask for pre-A level or college pre-course learning to prepare for when they arrive in September. It is important to say here that when GCSE results arrive, if a student is not happy with the grading, it is possible to do GCSE exams in summer 2021. So if a student is not happy with a given grade, and feel they could do better - some young people relax throughout the GCSE course and then study hard for final exams - in this situation they do have the chance to do the exam in summer 2021. So they can study for subjects they want to do again. This year's cohort will be very different to previous year groups.



**Fifi:** Thank you. Another question from the audience from Omar Haq - What is happening with reception placements for this September?

**Martine:** As far as I am aware, reception placements will still go ahead. The Government will make an announcement about reception placements on 17th April. But what will be different is how parents of those children will have their primary information days, which usually takes place during the summer term prior to their child starting at school. We don't know the details yet; it may be through emails or videos? We may not go back to school in September; none of us knows when we will go back to school.

**Lesley:** For deaf children applying to a new school, consultations with schools and Local Authorities are still happening, either remotely or through written correspondence. If your deaf child has not yet been appointed a school to start this September - either for primary placement or secondary placement - keep going with the consultations, you can ask for support from NDCS who can help you if you are unsure. Usually schools have a transition day where nursery children try half morning sessions in their new reception class and meet their new teacher. We are not sure if this will still happen, perhaps a letter will be posted or online information will be made available. We will wait to see what happens nearer the time and schools will manage something.

**Fifi:** This will be a similar situation for children in transition from primary to secondary school.

**Martine:** If your deaf child is in mainstream school and you haven't heard anything, please contact your Teacher of the Deaf or SENCO officer in your local council and ask them what is going on.

**Fifi:** Ok, next question from the audience, from Amanda Gilbert - my son loves story books but I am not good at talking, do we have to follow school's way or our way?

**Lesley:** As I said earlier, BSL is our language, you can use BSL to tell your son the story from the book. If your child is older, why not ask them to read the story themselves and then tell you the story in BSL? At the moment, Audible Books online for hearing children are offering free audio books which means children could listen and read the same story at the same time. Another way is to use a reading pen that speaks the words as you scan over words, there are free or discounted offers to try this due to the current situation. Grab opportunities that are on offer at the moment. At Frank Barnes School, children have been signing stories. There is also ITV SignPost signed stories but for you as a parent, your own signing style to sign a story - go for it! Your child will appreciate you signing a story to them.

**Martine:** I think Blanche Neville also have filmed signed stories. Due to this current situation, there are lots of choices. For children who want to hear stories, you can ask them to FaceTime grandparents, aunts and uncles - whoever can speak whoever is deaf or hearing - it is a lovely way to interact and read stories together as a family. It can be part of your routine every day, or every Friday to have story time on FaceTime with grandparents and children will be excited.

**Fifi:** Thank you, next question is from Abigail.

**Martine:** What a surprise!

**Fifi:** Question from Abigail Gorman - How do you have conversations with the children who were meant to do their GCSEs? This has probably hit them the hardest out of all the pupils.

**Martine:** Remind them, like what Lesley said earlier, they are not the only ones in this situation. No exams at all will take place this year. Talk to them in depth and recognise their feelings of disappointment that they feel that all the studying they have done has been wasted. Some children

will be more affected than others. Some children will be delighted that they are not doing exams. For those children who are disappointed, encourage those children to share their thoughts with parents or uncles, or whoever.

**Lesley:** Abigail, children who have been studying for their GCSE exams will also feel disappointed not being able to attend their prom, not having the anxieties prior to their exams, the feelings around their results day, their celebrations - the whole package - it is really tough for Year 11 students.

This will also apply to Year 13 students studying for their A-levels - the feeling of “unfinished business” - not having proper farewells before going to University. I would advise to try organise something when things are back to normal, perhaps a prom in July or September, or even an online celebration. It is really tough for those children who have lost their year group rites of passage. Other children in different year groups will think it is not fair that Year 11s and Year 13 have missed out on actual exams, but those children in Year 11 and Year 13 will feel unsettled and loss of confidence and may lose motivation to learn. It is important to try to think how to keep them motivated and think about their next step, whether it is preparing CVs or thinking of the next step of education to keep them motivated until September.

**Fifi:** It is new for all of us, we are all feeling unsettled.

**Martine:** I think it is important to mention that some young people may find it difficult to express themselves. Encourage them to keep a journal and write down how they are feeling. Offloading to another person or in a journal is vital for teenagers, obviously if they are feeling safe at home. In a few years' time, they can look back at their journal and see how far they have come.

**Fifi:** That is true. Another question from the audience - from Rosemary Oram - should pupils stop revising for their GCSEs/A-levels?

**Lesley:** Some coursework is still being finished so I would advise this should be carried on; we don't know what the Government will announce next. If you are carrying on that subject into A-level, I would carry on whatever work is given. Similarly with A-levels going to University this Autumn, carry on learning. If you have a subject that you are not so good at and perhaps expecting bad grade, carry on studying because you will have one additional year of studying and then do the exam in summer 2021 and perhaps you will get a higher grade. All this depends on which subjects and individuals' choices for their future.

**Fifi:** Martine?

**Martine:** To reinforce what Lesley is saying, any weak areas perhaps look for a private tutor offering online support? Or through Facebook support, bearing in mind online safety? If parents are not familiar with the A-level subject their child is studying, it is worth considering a private tutor.

**Fifi:** Good, thank you. Another question from Sarah Bishop - how to help SEN school-based autistic child if they do work at home?

**Martine:** As we discussed earlier, use a visual timetable and ensure that you involve the child in discussing what is planned for the morning and what is happening in the afternoon. Ask the child what choices they want to make so that they have a sense of control. To motivate, you could use flashcards labelled “now” and “later” and explain that we will be doing something now and then later we will have a reward. In the beginning, keep it short and then as they get used to this, you can lengthen the sessions.

**Lesley:** Hopefully learning tasks given by the child's school will be linked to their personal interests, whether this is cars or unicorns. You can ask the school to make learning linked to their personal interests to make it more attractive to learn, then you can build up from this.

**Fifi:** Thank you, I know we have ten minutes left so we will try to speed up in order to answer all the questions from the audience. Next question is from Kate Rowley - My child is dyslexic and shows strong signs of ADHD. Her attention span is extremely short. What strategies do teachers use with such children in schools?

**Martine:** I have found that audio books and immersion reading are useful for deaf children with dyslexia so you may find this useful for your hearing daughter, Kate? This is where you have a book to read, and have audiobook of the same book so that they can read and listen at the same time. Children with dyslexia find it easier to listen to the story to help them follow the reading. If you read the book alone without sound, it can be confusing. My husband is deaf and he has dyslexia and he finds it useful having the audio input with the reading at the same time.

**Fifi:** So you need to find out what works best for your child.

**Lesley:** With regard to ADHD, keep sessions short. Try to do a short burst of physical activity, do a short workout or even unloading the dishwasher and putting dishes away. After doing something physical, they can find it easier to sit for a longer period of time. This is often used in school, for example having a heavy rucksack with pressure helps them to calm down and focus on schoolwork better. Another good technique is to let the child sit on a swivel chair so that they can wiggle their bodies while working.

**Fifi:** there is a new thing in using weighed blankets too, will that work?

**Lesley:** Yes, it depends on the child's age and their individual needs. Some like wearing tight clothing such as a tight vest to feel a sense of safety. Some use weighed blankets, there are different ways. For children with ADHD, they need their bodies to move, so swivel chairs or a short burst of exercise can help.

**Fifi:** how about sitting on an exercise ball?

**Lesley:** Yes, swiveling about on an exercise ball can be an alternative way to help.

**Martine:** One thing about teenagers with ADHD, they like "to do" lists. So the night before, have a chat with your child and ask them what they would like to achieve tomorrow. It could be achievements like getting up at 7am, getting dressed and so on. Using a tick box list of "to do" as they go through the day helps them to focus.

**Fifi:** Thank you, another question from the audience, Mina - if a teacher teaches with more than one student on video call at the same time, is that better because other students can share ideas?

**Lesley:** I am aware that some mainstream schools have tried to carry on learning online with their classes using Zoom, but it has been proven difficult for a lot of schools. Some children don't have access to the internet or don't have a laptop or have other difficulties. At the same time, teachers themselves have three or four children to look after at home, or they may be ill themselves. It is really difficult. Also, you need to think about safeguarding - we shouldn't have a teacher alone with a child remotely. If the teacher is in a school setting with other teachers around, this is fine. It is a difficult situation, but some schools have experimented with the occasional online teaching with their class. This will not replace regular teaching as there are too many problems.

**Martine:** Like I said earlier, we are all in the same boat, learning through new technology at the same time through trial and error, trying to work out what is best.

**Fifi:** We have a few minutes left - another question from the audience, Caffy Nassimi-Green - your advice for deaf parents to deaf children regarding the standards and expectations when children return to school?

**Lesley:** My advice is, don't worry too much. What is important is to show your love, care and communication with your children so that they feel safe in the current situation. We are all in a similar situation. Whatever you do with your children, make it fun. The most important thing with home learning, if it becomes tedious and leads to arguing, home won't be a nice place - try to make it fun as possible using different ways, such as filming a story in BSL rather than struggling to read English, or act the story out - use different approaches to make it more attractive for children to learn. In the future, we will look back at this time and think of how our families stay in the house with no one going out or others coming into the house, we could think of this time as a wonderful family quality time so make the most of it.

**Martine:** Children won't remember the schoolwork, they will remember the fun times, the games played, cooking meals, reading stories and making films, FaceTime with grandparents - it is all part of learning.

**Fifi:** Last question from the audience, from Laura Coull - Will Coronavirus have an impact on the shortage of ToDs? Will it affect the training of potential future ToDs?

**Martine:** We already had a shortage of ToDs before the Coronavirus outbreak, we already know that there are a lot of older ToDs due to retire in the next five or ten years. Trainee ToDs will have their University courses moving onto online learning - I am not sure exactly what is happening with that, but I am aware that training placements will be put on hold. If anyone in the audience is interested in becoming ToD, please do talk to Lesley or myself!

**Lesley:** I have to say I have seen some wonderful examples of families sharing what they are learning at home online and it has been wonderful to see what skills there are out there - they would make great teachers!

**Martine:** We now have 150 Deaf ToDs across the UK including Ireland. We have a Deaf teachers group and we are hoping to launch our new homepage soon. This will help families with deaf children. If you would like to be added to the 150 Deaf ToDs, do join us!

**Fifi:** Time is up now; we need to finish but you have a lot of fans here on this live stream! Well done! Thank you! Remember, parents... chill and enjoy your time with your children and don't stress yourselves out, don't try to force yourselves. Parents and children are experiencing a very different world now, a different environment, so take each day at a time. Enjoy! Thank you, both Martine and Lesley, for answering all the questions, it was certainly appreciated. To the audience, thank you for watching us, look after yourselves and stay home, follow the Government guidance. If you are concerned about anything, please do contact Childline. If you are bored and you have nothing to do, there is plenty to watch on BSL Zone. Stay safe and look after each other. Stay at home. Goodnight!