

# Protecting children during COVID-19

## Tips for social workers and social welfare practitioners

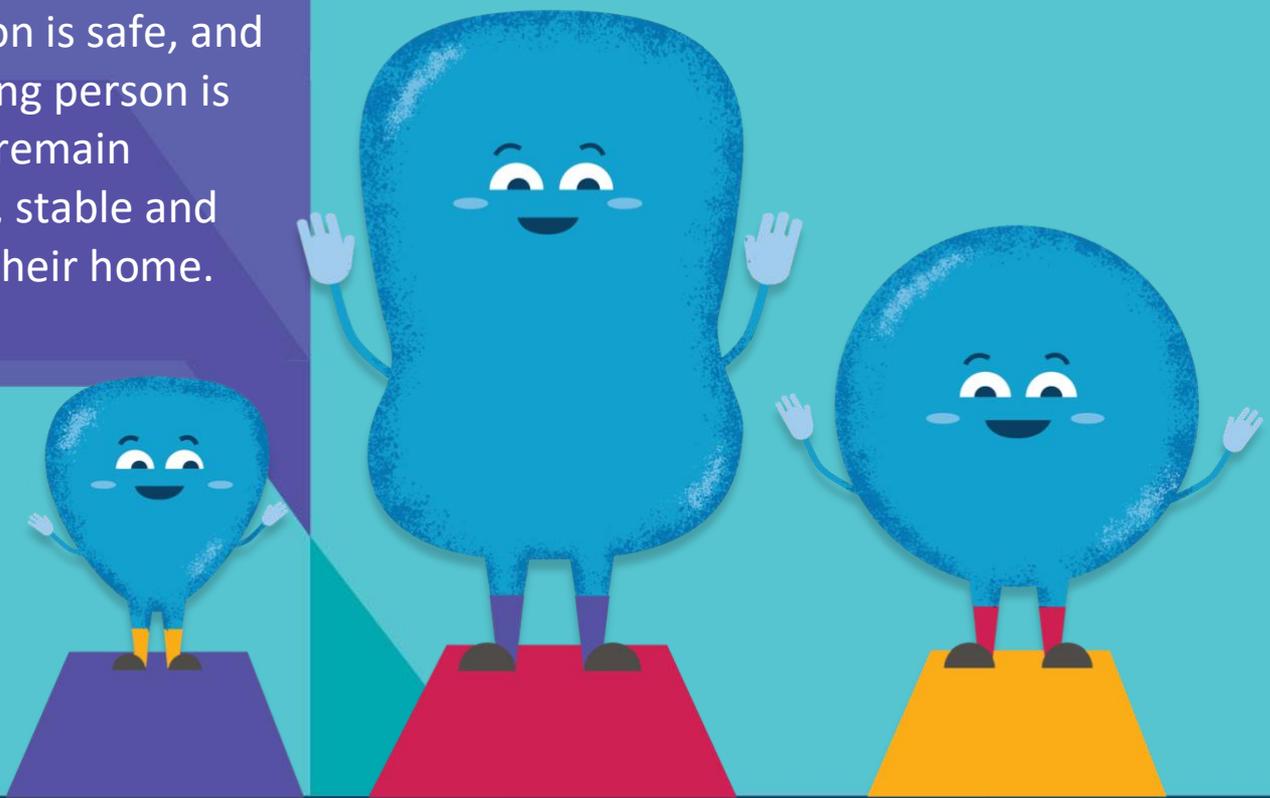
### #10 – Young people leaving residential care centres

When a residential care centre is sending young people home or arranging independent living for them in the community, there are several things that must be done before and after they leave the care centre to ensure that the transition is safe, and the young person is able to remain healthy, stable and safe in their home.

To ensure that the transition of young people leaving residential centre is safe, and the young person is able to remain healthy, stable and safe in their home:

- Ensure the safety of the transition
- Engage the young person throughout the process

Next: how to ensure safety and engage the young person



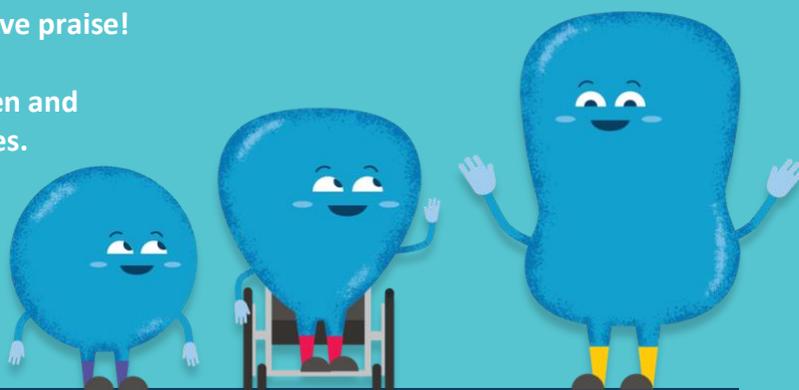
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## Tips for social workers and practitioners

### #10 – Young people leaving residential care centres

Social workers and practitioners, you deserve praise!

Thank you for continuing to support children and families in need, even in these difficult times. You are heroes.



## Ensure the safety of the transition

Ensure that the young person has a place to live before they leave the residential care centre

Facilitate the young person's transition. Ensure basic needs are met such as clothing, personal hygiene supplies. If the institution provides a basic stipend to cover basic needs, the social workers should oversee and explain its purpose to the young person.

If the young person has had any level of connection to the community while in care, they may already know some adults in this community. In such cases, it is preferable to seek secure housing for the young person close by to such adult(s) and to help ensure they have contacts of these adults in case they need safety and emotional support

Link the young person to support services within the community where they will live. This includes social, financial, housing and legal support services as well as the social worker and/or child care officer and local authority representative. Providing a referral letter can help facilitate the young person's access to support services.

Follow up with the young person after the transition using phone, WhatsApp or other social media. Refer to TIPS for virtual monitoring (#7) for additional guidance on how to conduct virtual monitoring



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## Engage the young person throughout the process

The young person leaving the residential care centre must be involved in selecting their accommodation

Young persons might like to be in independent living together, especially in a stressful time like COVID-19. If they come from same care centre, living together will not add infection risk and will help ensure a good source of emotional support

Before the young person leaves the residential care centre, discuss and prepare a virtual monitoring plan that includes talking via phone, email or WhatsApp on a weekly basis

Inform the young person about the Hotlines which offer free counselling if needed:

- WAO Hotline: 03 7956 3488
- TINA WhatsApp: 018 988 8058
- Talian Kasih: 15999 or WhatsApp 019 261 5999
- Befrienders KL: 03 7956 8144 or 03 7956 8145

Share information about other care leavers (persons who grew up or lived in a residential care centre and have since left the centre) and any existing virtual support group of care leavers with the young person should they want to connect with others living the same experience.

Depending on the unique circumstances of the case and the desires of the young person, consider delaying the transition until it can be done in a manner that is safe for the young person

Share TIPS for managing stress and mental health (see #4) and provide guidance for online safety as due to isolation the young person may be lonely and seek out online relationships, which makes them vulnerable to online exploitation etc.

