

COVID-19: Guidance for Schools and Children & Families' Social Work Teams for Vulnerable Children and Young People



It is recognised that there is considerable concern for all children and young people at this time. The situation raises the level of vulnerability for all. To comply however with Government and Public Health advice in respect of COVID-19, it is extremely important that the balance of risk is considered. There will be activity centre provision that is predominantly for the provision of childcare for Category 1 key workers, these centres will only be available for a maximum of twenty-four children at any one time (other places will be generated by partner provider nurseries and child minders). This will enable social distance and infection control guidance to be implemented. A very limited number of vulnerable children may be allocated a place at these centres if experiencing extreme challenges, however while this provision will be offered, there can be no compulsory attendance.

This guidance sits alongside the updated Child Protection guidance **Covid-19 Child Protection Briefing for Schools** and should be read in conjunction with that.

Provision for Vulnerable Children and Young People in Activity Centres

There is a clear need to ensure that only those with the highest level of need are offered support at an activity centre. Activity centres places will be considered for children and young people *"who are on the child protection register and considered to be at extreme risk if not in attendance at a centre, or, considered to be at extreme risk if not attending a centre and likely to be placed on the child protection register, to become looked after or suffer a care placement breakdown"*.

Decisions about these places will be made by Social Work managers and communicated to Headteachers; if Headteachers wish to communicate significant concerns about accessing a place for a particular child/young person they should contact the lead professional for that child/young person. If there is not a lead professional, or the lead professional is unavailable, please contact the Child Protection Duty Line on 01738 476768.

All transport and related arrangements will be organised by Children, Young People & Families Social Work Services.

Guidance for Remaining Vulnerable Children and Young People

Given the unsettling nature of the situation some children and young people will significantly benefit from still being in contact with their school, beyond home learning contacts. Relationships and the practice of care are going to be more important than ever. Maintaining a level of contact is therefore the most critical task for staff in schools. Contact with a calm member of staff is likely to provide the reassurance and consistency that could make a significant difference and help maintain an important connection to school.

Principles for Maintaining Contact

Please consider who your most vulnerable children are. Vulnerable children can come from a number of categories already well known to you, the requirement now is to consider those for whom the current circumstances of being away from education and routine brings heightened concern to their needs. It is recognised that those looked after at home and in kinship care are often more vulnerable than those who are accommodated and have the support of carers. Where children and young people have current involvement with Social Work and with Woodlea it is particularly important that early contact is made with plan partners to determine current level of risk and plan to mitigate that.

For vulnerable children and young people in activity centres there is a need to ensure oversight of wellbeing and attendance and also contact with your establishment:

- *Please link with the centre leader to confirm a key link person with your school and to receive feedback on attendance and wellbeing.*
- *Consider how contact will be maintained with these children/young people. Contact should be three times across the week, if not face-to-face through staff at the activity centre, then by telephone or digital means through your own staff.*
- *Review to see if you have any of your own school staff working in activity centres who may know the child/young person and therefore able to provide face to face contact with your establishment.*
- *If this is not the case or these staff are absent and unable to attend work, please then consider how to ensure some contact with a member of staff who is known to them, it may be possible to do this while they are attending the activity centre.*

In liaison with the centre there should therefore then be a monitoring of attendance and wellbeing, with at least three contacts a week, and also some contact with the child/young person's own school staff.

For the remainder, that is, **those who are vulnerable but not attending centres**, it is advised to consider two levels of priority:

- *For the most vulnerable category, there is a need to ensure oversight of wellbeing and welfare and regular contact with your establishment.*
- *Consider who the key school staff member is and ask that person to link with known key partner agencies.*
- *A communication plan that involves the partners but is led by the school link should be agreed. Where there is no social work involvement a communication plan that involves the partners but is led by the school link should be agreed. However where there is social work involvement the responsibility for leading the plan may be undertaken by social work if this is jointly agreed, this plan should continue to document clear roles and responsibilities for the school.*

- *The school staff member should monitor the plan and therefore review how contact is working.*
- *It would be helpful to speak to each child or young person in this category at least three times a week and have video contact if at all possible. Strain should not be put on families who have limited access to devices or mobile data, this is an aspect that should be discussed and actions clarified with key partners.*

For those in the second, lesser category, a similar communication plan should be in place, this may require less contacts across a week, *unless* vulnerability lies in there being less partners involved. It may be that the most effective way to support a family is through most of the contact being with parents but care should also be taken to make regular, if brief, contact with the child or young person themselves.

SMT Oversight

It is important that SMT keep an oversight of these contact plans and their progress, with an awareness of priorities and the ability to cover these contacts in the event of staff absence.

Child and Young Person Plans

It is important that planning and review of plans continues during this time. Targets and actions will need to be adapted and meetings should continue in a virtual format. Schools are therefore asked to audit their plans for priorities for review at this time. Looked After children and young people as well as those with a Co-ordinated Support Plan have time sensitive plans.

Partnerships

Key partners are all continuing to provide the best service they can, given the circumstances to support the plan. Details are given in the '*home learning*' guidance. During this time it is expected that each partner agency will link with the key educational staff and work to provide adapted support to children and young people. Partners can most effectively adapt what they do when communication around each child and young person is kept up-to-date and the plans formally reviewed where this is a priority. ECS managers are continuing to review appropriate support services for these circumstances.

Home Learning

General home learning guidance is given separately. For children and young people requiring individualised planning and so additional support at this time, then a range of methods may be used including:

- *maintaining contact with children, young people through texts/phone calls and applications such as Seesaw;*
- *providing individual packs of materials for children and young people without internet access or for those unable to use IT;*
- *providing daily programmes of work and suggested activities covering literacy, numeracy and HWB. This may be through various mediums including video teaching tutorials, Seesaw, Microsoft Teams, Glow and other applications;*
- *suggesting activities for family learning in broader aspects of the curriculum such as life skills, and motor skills.*



Advice to Parents and Carers Around Supporting Wellbeing and Learning for Children and Young People with Additional Support Needs

It should be made clear that materials made available are intended to provide continuation of learning and that this should not add a pressure to families. Contact should be in place for families where there is an assessed need based on vulnerability (see above). For all children and young people with additional support needs, this can be supported through texts/phone calls and applications such as Seesaw.

Parents will continue to be involved remotely in the educational planning process for children and young people.

Families in receipt of support from voluntary agencies, for example, Parent to Parent (P2P), Perth Autism Support (PAS) will continue to receive advice through telephone contact/texts.

Sources of Support for Parents and Carers

Parents and carers will be in need of support at this time. An overview of key advice and additional sources of support has been prepared and is available on the PKC website www.pkc.gov.uk/coronavirus This will be updated as appropriate.

The Educational Psychology Service is also offering a telephone consultation service with a Psychologist for any parent, carer, young person or partner agency at this time. The hours are term-time, 10.00 am to 12.00 noon and 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm Monday to Friday, and between 6.00 pm and 8.00 pm on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, by calling 01738 476242.

Where a parent/carer or young person wishes to access a specific source of support ordinarily accessed through schools, this should continue to be the identified route.

Support for Education Staff

Other guidance exists and particular attention should be given to the following of the **Covid 19 Child Protection Briefing for Schools**.

Where staff have concerns and queries, existing sources of support through the Inclusion team, Educational Psychology and School Improvement teams will continue. ECS will be closely monitoring this situation and seeking to respond to any particular areas of need.

Please also see the guidance on staff wellbeing contained within the **Head of Establishment Guide: Working During School Closures** guidance, it is of paramount importance to look after yourself, your staff and each other to best meet the needs of children and young people.

If you or someone you know would like a copy of this document in another language or format, (on occasion, only a summary of the document will be provided in translation), this can be arranged by contacting the Customer Service Centre on 01738 475000.

You can also send us a text message on 07824 498145.

All Council Services can offer a telephone translation facility.

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