

## Stirling Council Guidance for Head Teachers and Partners

### Supporting Stirling's Vulnerable Children during COVID-19

Due to the unprecedented situation of COVID-19, local authorities have been progressing plans to support children and young people following school closures on 20<sup>th</sup> March, with a focus on providing critical provision for two key groups:

- Children of essential keyworkers:  
Stirling Council currently has five Hubs to provide childcare for essential key workers.
- Vulnerable children and young people:  
This document outlines Stirling Council's response to providing protection and support for our most vulnerable children and young people.

Our key principles are based on the Scottish Government's guidance on COVID-19:

- Every child or young person, who can be safely cared for at home, should be at home, to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- Where a child or young person does attend a Hub setting, this should be for the minimum amount of time required.
- Adults and children/young people should follow social distancing guidance at all times, with robust assessments in place to manage identified risks.
- Shielding is a measure to protect people who are extremely vulnerable to severe illness from COVID-19 because of an underlying health condition therefore guidance must be followed.

To stay safe and to minimise the spread of COVID-19, **we must keep the number of children and young people accessing Hubs to an absolute minimum.**

Stirling Council has robust processes in place to identify and prioritise vulnerable children in our local communities through GIRFEC and the child's plan.

As well as factors such as poverty, child protection and those with complex additional support needs, staff are aware that due to the uncertainty of the current situation there is likely to be increased vulnerability within some families such as the impact on employment, finances and on wellbeing.

Universal supports have been offered by our schools and early years provisions for all children and young people however a range of supports are currently being provided to meet the needs of our most vulnerable children and young people:

- School staff are making regular daily or weekly contact by telephone, email or social media, to vulnerable families, with some providing doorstep checks with families such as dropping off meals or learning packs.
- Delivery of free school meals is ongoing with a plan for support workers to deliver these to families.
- School staff are providing access to online learning activities through forums such as Google Classrooms, G-Suite, Glow, school websites, Dojo.
- Some schools provided learning packs for children and young people prior to school closures.

- Support services such as the Stirling Inclusion Support Service, ASN Outreach, Educational Psychology Service, the Parent and Family Support Team, Barnardos and Includem are making regular contact with parent/carers, children and young people, who have additional support needs and where concerns are present, regarding increased vulnerability.
- A small number of children with additional support needs have accessed a Hub for respite purposes, with specialist staff providing support.
- An online resource is available for parent/carers and children/young people to provide advice, support and information covering topics such as health and wellbeing and learning activities at home.
- An advice line has been set up for those working with children and young people who have concerns about a child or young person's wellbeing.

### Vulnerable Children and Young People

It is acknowledged that all children and young people are likely to experience some increased vulnerability due to COVID-19, particularly those with additional support needs. It has been the aim of Stirling Council to provide a range of resources available for the majority of children, young people and families, to support them through this challenging time.

It is clear however, that in order to provide a more targeted response, there needs to be a clear outline of the groups of children and young people who will currently be at an increased level of vulnerability.

Vulnerable children in this context includes:

- Those on the child protection register, those who are looked after (including kinship care) and, those on the edge of care.
- Children in receipt of Free School Meals.
- Children and young people who have complex additional support needs.
- Children and young people affected by poverty and deprivation.

We acknowledge that not all children and young people within these categories will require additional support at this time, particularly if they have strong protective factors in place to support them. Protective factors in a child's life such as nurturing relationships at home, parental understanding of a child's needs and family resilience, should be taken into account.

With the exception of the children and young people of essential keyworkers, the only children and young people who should physically attend a Hub provision are those for whom **the risk of being at home outweighs the risk of being in a Hub**. The level of support provided must be proportionate to the level of need using GIRFEC's National Practice Model. Ultimately, this is a professional judgement made by the Head Teacher and Lead Professional in collaboration with the Team around the Child (TAC), including the parent/carer. For children and young people known to social work services, a discussion must take place with the social worker or social work team leader, regarding assessment of risk and appropriate levels of provision.

Children who are medically vulnerable and where the level of risk is high at home should only attend a Hub by exception and the Scottish Government's guidance on shielding must be followed. Consultation with a relevant medical professional and the Social Work Team Leader if known to Social Work, should take place as part of a robust risk assessment, when the risk of being at home outweighs the risk of attending a Hub.

Careful consideration of a child or young person whose parent/carer has an underlying health condition is required when assessing the level of need and risk.

### Core Offers for vulnerable children and young people:

Dependent on a Team around the Child's assessment of risk and protective factors, the following levels of targeted and enhanced provision could be considered for a **vulnerable** child or young person:

<b>Level 1: Enhanced Support - Hub Provision</b>
<p>A child or young person attends a Hub for a maximum of three half-day sessions per week. This may include a sibling group.</p> <p>A virtual TAC should be held and if there is a recommendation for respite, a discussion with the virtual wellbeing team would be the next step. (see appendix 2) It would be expected that staff who know the child/young person, supports the respite.</p>
<b>Level 2: Targeted Support - Phone/online support/virtual support</b>
<p>The Lead Professional ensures that a key member of staff makes regular contact with a vulnerable family or a child/young person twice weekly using an appropriate method of contact such as telephone, doorstep checks or other bespoke response.</p> <p>*Please note that a discussion with the virtual TAC must take place to establish who is best placed to make the contact and to avoid overwhelming a family with calls from numerous professionals. Refer to Appendix 1 – points to consider.</p>
<b>Level 3: Targeted Support - Free School Meals</b>
<p>Provision of free school meal only</p>

**It is anticipated that only a very small number of vulnerable children will be assessed as requiring level 1 support.** Movement between levels of provision should be fluid. Robust risk assessments would be required for the provision of respite.

In some instances, a child or young person could be assessed as requiring additional support but the parent/carer wishes to self-isolate. In such circumstances, parental choice should be respected. If the child is known to Social Work then this information should be passed on to the social worker and the social work team leads. Other levels of support should be offered to ensure regular contact is being made (as above).

### Collating information of vulnerable children and young people:

For children that Head Teachers & Social Work Team Leads have identified as vulnerable, the Virtual Wellbeing Team will collate information. The following information will be recorded:

- Child's name
- Date of birth
- School or Early Years provision
- Risk and resilience factors based on the National Practice Model

For post-16 support, Stirling's Champions Board and the Throughcare and Aftercare team will gather information regarding current risks and vulnerabilities and outline key actions.

### Points to Consider:

The needs of children and their families are likely to change in the coming weeks therefore virtual TAC meetings are encouraged to ensure that needs are identified.

- Remember – when using glow email do not provide confidential information because the site is not secure. Please use either a [stirling.gov.uk](mailto:stirling.gov.uk) email, use the telephone or email the person and ask if they can call you back. If a professional has any concerns around the security of an email message, it is advisable to communicate about a child by telephone.
- Child protection concerns will be actioned in the same way.
- There is an advice line (telephone and email) available for anyone who has a query about a child or young person in relation to wellbeing, learning or for any queries about COVID-19. All the information can be accessed on <https://www.stirling.gov.uk/learning-education/coronavirus-education-updates/>
- An advice line specifically for a young person (12 years and above) is being set up for any queries about wellbeing, learning (such as exams), COVID-19. Further details will follow.
- Advice and information on a range of topics related to the COVID-19 situation for children/young people, for parent/carers is accessible on <https://www.stirling.gov.uk/learning-education/coronavirus-education-updates/> A page for staff will be added shortly.
- The Council has set up a support network for vulnerable people in the community. Further information can be found at <https://www.stirling.gov.uk/planning-building-the-environment/emergencies-emergency-planning/coronavirus/support-for-people-1/>
- For advice in relation to loss and bereavement, schools should contact their link educational psychologist.
- Refer to Appendix 1: Good Practice Guidance for Schools
- Refer to Appendix 2: Flowchart of process – supporting the needs of vulnerable children

**Key Contacts:**

<b>Service/Team</b>	<b>Contact Person</b>	<b>Contact Details</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>
Parent and Family Support Team	Susan West	<a href="mailto:wests@stirling.gov.uk">wests@stirling.gov.uk</a>	07512 433232
Educational Psychology Team	Morven Graham	<a href="mailto:grahammo@stirling.gov.uk">grahammo@stirling.gov.uk</a>	01786 237586
ASN Outreach Team	Fiona Edward-Smith	<a href="mailto:edwardsmithf60s@glowmail.org.uk">edwardsmithf60s@glowmail.org.uk</a>	07717544704
SISS	Yvonne Wright	<a href="mailto:wrighty58s@stirling.gov.uk">wrighty58s@stirling.gov.uk</a>	
Youth Services	Lisa Steele	<a href="mailto:steelel@stirling.gov.uk">steelel@stirling.gov.uk</a>	07990082279
Food	Jennifer Abernethy	<a href="mailto:abernethyj@stirling.gov.uk">abernethyj@stirling.gov.uk</a>	07919277434
Child Protection queries/concerns	Sarah Anderson	<a href="mailto:andersons1@stirling.gov.uk">andersons1@stirling.gov.uk</a>	07825 137 610
Social Work Team Leads	Karen Bryce (South 1)	<a href="mailto:brycek@stirling.gov.uk">brycek@stirling.gov.uk</a>	01786 233718
	Lauren McLoughlin (South 2)	<a href="mailto:mcloughlinl@stirling.gov.uk">mcloughlinl@stirling.gov.uk</a>	01786 475497
	Kath Barclay (North 1)	<a href="mailto:barclayk@stirling.gov.uk">barclayk@stirling.gov.uk</a>	01786 471379
	Suzanne McPhee (North 2)	<a href="mailto:mcphees@stirling.gov.uk">mcphees@stirling.gov.uk</a>	01786 471 379
	Lynn Smithwhite (Intake)	<a href="mailto:smithwhitel@stirling.gov.uk">smithwhitel@stirling.gov.uk</a>	01786 233842
	Sheena Allan (Disability)	<a href="mailto:allans@stirling.gov.uk">allans@stirling.gov.uk</a>	07881310975
	Chris Walsh (TCAC)	<a href="mailto:walshc@stirling.gov.uk">walshc@stirling.gov.uk</a>	07717544562
CECYP Virtual Head Team	Sarah Anderson	<a href="mailto:andersons1@stirling.gov.uk">andersons1@stirling.gov.uk</a>	07825 137 610
	Aisling Shandley	<a href="mailto:shandleya05s@stirling.gov.uk">shandleya05s@stirling.gov.uk</a>	
	Deborah Lee	<a href="mailto:leed@stirling.gov.uk">leed@stirling.gov.uk</a>	01786 237589
Champions Board Development Officer	Tracy Degan	<a href="mailto:degant@stirling.gov.uk">degant@stirling.gov.uk</a>	07384 536337
Support Network for Vulnerable People		<a href="mailto:communitysupport@stirling.gov.uk">communitysupport@stirling.gov.uk</a>	01786 404040

## **Appendix 1: Supporting Vulnerable Learners and Families Guidance- Covid 19**

### **Good Practice Guidance for Schools**

GIRFEC principles and values are at the heart of what we do across Stirling Council schools and settings. We aim to support learners and families to ensure they get the right help and support at the right time to ensure they are safe, secure, loved and cared for so they can realise their potential. (Getting It Right for Every Child Policy, Scottish Government)

Currently we are working in challenging times and the need to support families is great. Being self-isolated brings stress and challenge for learners and their families and we want to ensure we respond to this as well as we can.

Universal supports:

- Schools and settings are all working very hard to ensure all learners and families have access to a range of home learning experiences and activities during school closures.
- Schools and settings are maintaining contact with families through school email, school mobiles, social media platforms (Dojo, Seesaw, Google classrooms and Microsoft Teams).

Schools and settings can also provide **supports to vulnerable learners and families** in a number of ways:

- Telephone check in with vulnerable families and recording of all contacts made (coordinated by ISW, HWB Officers, SLT). (SLT to ensure wellbeing of staff carrying out the check in calls)
- Individualised support provided through learning packs and/ or contact with ASN Outreach staff.
- Available contacts/ communication for families to seek advice and help (emails addresses, telephone numbers).
- Provision of electronic devices to support home learning for targeted learners.
- Food parcel drop offs for identified families/ learners.
- Continuity of Staged Intervention process/ TAC meetings via email/ telephone.

Points to consider:

- Child Protection procedures will continue in the same manner.
- Access to internet/ social media/ making telephone calls may be impacted as we move forward due to finance constraints.
- Would a coordinated approach with other services provide effective support for a family?
- What are the essential needs for the family/ learner e.g. food, finance, health support, learning?
- Monitor families increasing vulnerabilities and discuss best possible supports to meet needs.
- How does a parent/carer or child/young person contact you if needed?

## Appendix 2: Meeting the needs of vulnerable children and young people in Stirling

### Frequently Asked Questions

**1. What should I do if I have a concern about a child or young person's wellbeing (not CP)?**

Refer to the guidance on 'Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable Children and Young People in Stirling'. Review current support/s that you/the Team around the Child (TAC) can offer. Seek advice from other services where appropriate. Consult with TAC members before arranging a more formal virtual TAC meeting. Consider the parent/carer's view as well as the child's view.

**2. How do I arrange a virtual TAC meeting when I have concerns about a vulnerable child or young person?**

To have a virtual discussion you must ensure you are using a secure method of contact when discussing confidential information. The advice currently is that this could be through Microsoft Teams, secure email using a [stirling.gov.uk](mailto:stirling.gov.uk) address or telephone calls. You can also request a slot to have a conference call by contacting [psychological@stirling.gov.uk](mailto:psychological@stirling.gov.uk)

**3. Who can support the discussions at a TAC?**

A list of key contacts is included in the guidance that accompanies this information. There are services who you can consult with such as Children and Families, the educational psychology service, ASN Outreach, Stirling Inclusion Support Service and the parent and family support team.

**4. Do I need to inform parent/carers of the TAC meeting?**

Yes, you will need to have spoken with a parent/carer about the virtual TAC and gained their consent. For any child who is 12 years and above, they also should be made aware of the virtual TAC and views should be gathered.

**5. How do we record a virtual TAC discussion?**

Ideally, you would minute the discussion on a Form 6, outlining key actions.

**6. What support is available for a vulnerable family?**

Stirling Council has developed a support network to help Stirling's most vulnerable people. This service is for residents who are 'shielding', in need of care, essential supplies or other essential services during the Coronavirus pandemic. An online form can be completed at <https://www.stirling.gov.uk/planning-building-the-environment/emergencies-emergency-planning/coronavirus/support-for-people-1/>

Telephone number: - 01786 404040

There are also a number of support services such as Children and Families Social Work team, ASN Outreach, Stirling Inclusion Support Service, the Educational Psychology Service, Parent and Family Support Team and the Champions Board Development Officer, who are in contact with families and who have provided online resources and learning activity packs for children and families to use.

**7. What could level two provision of support consist of?**

There are a range of activities that would ensure that regular contact is maintained for a vulnerable family such as daily and/or twice weekly telephone calls. (Please

ensure that as a TAC you have agreed who makes these calls to ensure the family is not overwhelmed by a number of services making contact).

Familiar staff and keyworkers, for example could make doorstep checks, if food or a learning pack is being delivered.

Bespoke activities can be developed for children by support services such as regulation activities, to help manage dysregulation at home. This should be discussed at virtual TACs.

## **8. What would respite consist of?**

Respite would be approved following a discussion between the Lead Professional and the virtual wellbeing team and based on the key principles within the guidance.

Respite should be supported by familiar staff to help maintain positive relationships and to promote a sense of connectedness. Ideally, this support should come from the child's school or early year's provision. Other specialist staff for example from Children and Families Social Work Team, ASN Outreach, Parent and Family Support and Stirling Inclusion Support Service could be considered in discussion with the team managers. The content of respite sessions should differ from a childcare approach. The TAC should develop the content of each session, supported by suggestions from the virtual wellbeing team.

## **9. Is a risk assessment required?**

Yes, a risk assessment for a child or young person needs to be amended to take account of the current COVID-19 situation and Scottish Government guidance on social distancing, shielding etc.

A risk assessment for the Hub will be in place and will be managed by the Hub Leads.

## **10. Who are the Virtual Wellbeing Team members?**

The Virtual Wellbeing Team would consist of leads from services and provisions such as ASN Outreach, the Inclusion Support Service, Educational Psychology, specialist and mainstream school representatives, Parent and Family Support, Virtual Head Teacher's Team and Children and Families Social Work team.

## **11. What is the purpose of the Virtual Wellbeing Team?**

The Virtual Wellbeing Team is there to support and guide discussions regarding a vulnerable child using a problem solving, solution focused approach. The team will explore with the Lead Professional any other bespoke ideas or activities that could support a child and family at home, to minimise the risk of spreading infection. If respite is approved, the frequency, staffing, location, risk assessment and content of respite will be discussed and agreed.

## **12. Who would I contact if I have any queries about respite, discussion with the Virtual Wellbeing Team or the levels of provision for a vulnerable child?**

If you are seeking initial advice on the process of considering provision for a vulnerable child, please contact Morven Graham at [grahammo@stirling.gov.uk](mailto:grahammo@stirling.gov.uk) or on 01786 237586.



### Appendix 3: FLOWCHART – MEETING THE NEEDS OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN DURING COVID-19

