

Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership with Northumberland Education and Skills Service

Half termly bulletin for Governors, Headteachers/Principals and Designated Safeguarding Leads in Schools, Academies and Alternative Providers

Issue 32: 9th April 2020

DSL support during the Coronavirus Covid 19 outbreak

During the school closure period we are going to publish a Safe to Learn bulletin every Friday. Please remember to share with all staff and your governing body.

The next issue will be shared with you on Friday 24th April 2020.

Returning to School

On Monday 20th April you may have young people returning to school after they have had an Easter break, even if you have been open. Please ensure you follow all of the latest government guidance in relation to social distancing.

You may also find that children who you expected to be in school do not return and in this situation ensure you follow the local authority's [contact with vulnerable children guidance](#).

And finally, if you have children returning to your school after they have attended another school over the Easter break ensure you follow the [safeguarding procedure for children moving schools](#).

Vulnerable children at school

Where children have been identified as vulnerable, the national guidance is clear that there is an expectation that these children will attend provision. Key/social workers should continue to liaise with and support the family to ensure the child attends the school provision wherever possible and continue to revisit this with the family where they are not attending. For our looked after children, decisions on their school attendance have been made in conjunction with their carers and ESLAC have offered support as needed to either the school or the placement respectively.

Children's Services Update

[Guidance for local authorities on children's social care](#)

The government circulated guidance in relation to children's social care on 3rd April 2020 and it is useful to read this alongside the guidance for schools on temporary closures and the guidance on vulnerable children and young people.

The guidance details key principles on which to base decision making and that the rationale and reasons for decision making should be clearly recorded. **It is important that in our work with our colleagues from Children's Services that we understand the rationale behind their decision making and that we also record all actions taken and the discussions we have had before taking any actions.**

Social care work in Northumberland is focussing on the following priorities:

- Children at risk of significant harm or where safeguarding issues are raised
- Children whose placement is at risk of breakdown (this includes home, care, independent or supported living)

Children's Services Home Visits

The guidance below is for children's social care staff who will be required to undertake home visits however schools may find it useful, either for their own visits or for understanding how social workers are operating.

Decisions to visit

All cases should be RAG rated in consultation with your team manager to determine how children are visited. The rating should be based on risks relating to safeguarding or placement breakdown. Ratings should take account of the status of the case LAC/CIN/CP/EH, the nature, severity and immediacy of the risks and needs, the availability and effectiveness of the family support networks, the child's age, other professionals who will see the child and family, school attendance or non attendance, the health needs of the family. The RAG rating should be reviewed at every supervision and amended to reflect changing circumstances

*Children who are RAG rated as Red **must** be visited and seen face to face at least once every 4 weeks, unless the family are officially shielding or self isolating and symptomatic, in which case you must agree a safety plan with your team manager. Additional virtual visits may be undertaken, and in some cases additional face to face visits will be required during the 4 week period.*

*Children who are RAG rated as Amber **should** be visited and seen face to face at least once every 4 weeks if this is safe and possible to do so. If the family are officially shielding or self isolating and symptomatic you must agree a safety plan with your team manager. Additional virtual visits may be undertaken and in some cases additional face to face visits will be carried out during the 4 week period.*

Children who are RAG rated as Green can be visited virtually (Skype etc) and this can be recorded as statutory visit (CP/LAC) if the virtual visit took place with the child at home or in placement and the child was seen on the screen and spoken to directly. If these children have a virtual visit in a 4 week period, then the following visit should take place face to face.

Preparing for and undertaking a home visit:

It is important to note that the vast majority of home visiting for children's social care staff will not require PPE, and the circumstances where this will be required are detailed below. As above, good hand hygiene is the crucial protective factor. Please make sure that you are up to date with the latest public health guidance

Where possible, make agency checks with professionals who last saw the child for a professional opinion on their presentation and welfare. Ask about any specific information and issues that might be pertinent that occurred in the last few days.

Staff where possible should call ahead of a visit to check that the household is not in isolation due to the client, or a family member displaying symptoms of Covid 19 or any family member shielding. See current guidance <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>. If any family or household member is shielding, PPE must be worn (see below)

Where possible try to establish the details and who in the household may be affected. If appropriate, and if

the symptomatic individual does not need to be seen as part of the visit then request that they remain in another part of the house.

If all need to be seen, maintain the required social distance of a minimum of 2 metres. This includes seeing family members in a safe space outside/in the garden where possible or even through the window. If bedrooms or other areas of the house need to be seen, check if this can be done by photograph or other digital means by the family. Minimise the time for the visit where possible. In cases where pre-announcement of a home visit is not appropriate or in cases where a safeguarding visit is deemed essential the staff member should follow the guidance below.

If it has been assessed between the worker and line manager that due to the potential risk of violence from a client, a two person visit is required, safe working procedures should then be implemented and followed so that the 2m social distancing guidelines are not breached for staff during their travel arrangements to and from the home visit.

*At the point of attending the house, once you have established the reason for the visit, please ask questions as above in relation to the well-being of the household. This situational risk assessment is important as if there are no suspected cases within the household and no household member is shielding, there is **no additional personal protection equipment (PPE) required in these situations. However staff need to follow current good infection control and distancing guidance.***

Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership Update

The NSSP has a webpage with a section dedicated to the [Covid 19 outbreak](#). You can also find there an updated version of the Tri.x Guidance (the previous version had a minor error with the OneCall details).

National Updates

Updated guidance for schools about temporarily closing

The DfE has updated guidance on the [temporary closure of schools](#) to include information on supporting children with mental health issues, advice for educational staff from overseas, primary school offer day, and advice for governors on reinstating excluded pupils.

Handling school complaints during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

The guidance for local authority maintained schools about setting up and reviewing [complaints procedures](#) has been updated to include best practice guidance about handling complaints during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The DfE does not expect schools to handle new or existing complaints while they are closed. Schools should, however, still engage with parents and pupils where they can. Complaints should be considered once schools have reopened.

DBS Service

The Disclosure and Barring Service has produced a regularly updated list of answers to [frequently asked questions](#) related to DBS and coronavirus.

Domestic Abuse

Recognising the increased vulnerabilities in homes where there may be domestic abuse, the government has updated their guidance and announced a new campaign to support victims.

- [Support for victims of domestic abuse](#) (updated 11 April)
- [DA awareness campaign](#)

Exploitation of Children and Young People

The Children's Commissioner, Anne Longfield, has expressed her concerns that more children and young people will get pulled into gang activity as the criminals involved exploit restrictions on movement and school

closures. For the children who live in households affected by domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health school is often their place of stability and safety and without this Longfield believes that more young people will become vulnerable to exploitation. The ambiguity about whether vulnerable children should be at school makes it easier for them to go missing and get sucked into criminal activity. Gangs are retreating to smaller areas as the county lines model can't operate as is has done due to the restrictions – instead of young people being recruited to travel, they are being recruited to deliver on home turf.

Schools should ensure they follow the school closure [children missing education procedures](#) and work in partnership with colleagues from children's services to ensure that where there are concerns about the welfare of children appropriate attempts are made to contact the families.

The Children's Commissioner's website

The Children's Commissioner has published a number of [useful resources](#) on the website, including a children's guide to the coronavirus and a policy briefing on domestic abuse and its impact on children particularly during the coronavirus outbreak. The site also contains regular blogs from the commissioner providing advice on how families and young people can cope while at home.

NSPCC website

Another useful site where resources can be found is the [NSPCC website](#) which has recently added a briefing which covers key safeguarding guidance from all four UK nations on how to keep children safe during the pandemic and includes answers to key questions you may be thinking about.

Resources for Young People and Staff

A number of resources have been published in the last few weeks to support emotional wellbeing:

- [Teacher resilience during Coronavirus](#)
- Teams across the local authority have been building up resources for schools to use and have been placing them on padlets for easy access. These padlets will be constantly being added to, so it is worth checking regularly. The padlets are also located on homepage of the public-facing NCC website for ease of access.
 - SEN Support Services padlet [here](#).
 - Managing Bereavement [here](#).
 - Early Years: EY Home Learning link [here](#)
 - Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2: KS1 and KS2 Home Learning Link – [here](#)

Contact us

Whether your school is open or closed during the next few months, please contact us with any queries you might have by phone or by email.

Carol Leckie, Schools' Safeguarding Team Manager, 01670 622720

Carol.Leckie@northumberland.gov.uk

If you cannot make contact with a member of staff directly then please use these generic details. Your query will be logged and you will receive a response by the end of the working day or within 24 hours.

- If you have a query for the Education Welfare team please email - educationwelfare@northumberland.gov.uk
- If you have a query for the looked after children's team please email - eslac.info@northumberland.gov.uk
- If you have a query for the Safeguarding team or children educated other than at school team please email - eotashealth@northumberland.gov.uk
- If you have a more urgent query or request please telephone 01670 622787.