

Additional Safeguarding Guidance: A Response to COVID 19

Agreed and adopted by the Governing Body: 12th June 2020

Background

This additional guidance has been written as a result of the ongoing response to COVID 19. It is under review and may be updated as circumstances continue to evolve and in light of changes made to government guidance published on 27th March 2020 [Coronavirus \(COVID 19\): safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers](#).

Help and support

[Advice for the education sector](#) is being updated daily.

The Department for Education COVID-19 helpline, is available to answer questions.

DfE coronavirus helpline

If you have a query about coronavirus (COVID-19), relating to schools and other educational establishments in England contact our helpline.

Email: DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk

Telephone 0800 046 8687 (lines are open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm and weekends 10am to 4pm)

If you are a member of school staff, ensure you have the school's unique reference number (URN or UK PRN) available when calling the hotline.

Role of the local authority

The Local Authority will continue to support schools to ensure that children of critical workers and vulnerable children can, where required, attend a school or college. The Local Authority will continue to be responsible for maintaining effective safeguarding and child protection services in this challenging time to ensure schools and colleges can access the support they need.

Safeguarding and clusters

Where our school collaborates and children and/or staff from multiple settings are clustered in one place, the principles in [Keeping children safe in education \(KCSIE\)](#) and [Coronavirus \(COVID 19\): safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers](#) continue to apply.

In particular, the school or college that is acting as the hub in the cluster should continue to provide a safe environment, keep children safe and ensure staff and volunteers have been appropriately checked and risk assessments carried out as required. Additional advice on clusters and safeguarding will be provided by the Department for Education in due course.

Keeping children safe in schools

KCSIE is statutory safeguarding guidance that schools and colleges should continue to have regard to as per their legislative duty and/or funding agreement requirements.

Whilst we acknowledge the pressure that the school is under, it remains essential that as far as possible the school continues to be a safe place for children. This additional guidance supports our governing body, senior leadership team, designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) and staff so they can continue to have appropriate regard to KCSIE and keep our children safe.

The way our school is currently operating in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) is fundamentally different to business as usual, however, a number of important safeguarding principles remain the same:

- with regard to safeguarding, the best interests of children must always continue to come first
- if anyone in school has a safeguarding concern about any child they should continue to act and act immediately
- a DSL or deputy should be available
- it is essential that unsuitable people are not allowed to enter the children's workforce and/or gain access to children
- children should continue to be protected when they are online

Child protection policy

The school will continue to adhere to the current child protection policy updated in September 2019 which reflects 'business as usual', however this does not accurately reflect new arrangements in response to COVID-19.

The child protection policy has been reviewed and revised and will be kept under review as circumstances continue to evolve.

Updated advice received from Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership

Partnership working is vital during this current time and multi-agency safeguarding arrangements will continue as usual, however schools are to be mindful that this may be undertaken in a different way whilst trying to avoid as much face to face contact as possible.

Senior Leaders within Durham County Council will continue to review children's circumstances and have implemented the following:

- Prioritising cases based on situation/circumstances etc.
- Moving to more agile working.
- Carry out multi-agency Strategy Meetings, Initial Child Protection Conferences, Review Child Protection Conferences, Core Groups and Looked After Reviews for children using virtual platforms wherever possible and will continue to work with partners to manage this.
- Face to face home visits will be done based on a risk assessment for the child in conjunction with managers. As much contact as possible with families will be done by phone and through virtual platforms where it is safe to do so. Where staff are visiting family homes, they will do so using guidance from Public Health England which includes the practice of social distancing.

- Children's Social Care and Early Help will be arranging service delivery into 3 virtual locality hubs based in North, South and East Durham. Each will have a strategic safeguarding manager and will be working with partners in health and education to ensure that they use collective resources to provide support to those children who are most vulnerable and in need of contact or services. The work of the locality hubs at this time is focused on those children who are CIN; CP or children at risk of becoming Looked After.
- All new referrals for children where there are concerns for their welfare or safety should be made to First Contact in the usual way using the usual referral mechanisms.
- Requesting colleagues across partner agencies should proactively share information within existing multi agency team around family arrangements about families who they know are self-isolating, to avoid any unnecessary home visits and contact, ensuring all are protected from unnecessary exposure to the virus.
- Continually reassess risk and reprioritise work across the partnership to ensure we all continue to provide a safeguarding service to those children and vulnerable adults who are most at risk.

Senior Leaders across Health organisations have implemented the following:

- All health partners have business continuity plans which identify Safeguarding Children and Adults and Children who are Looked After as key priority areas.
- All health partners will remain engaged in multiagency discussions including the MASH, MARAC and MAPPA as needed with SPOC arrangements in place.
- Work with partners to ensure that children who may have experienced abuse or neglect are appropriately and holistically assessed in a timely manner.
- Referrals for paediatric assessment will follow the same pathway of care although children may be assessed in different settings to minimise infection risks as per PHE and RCPCH guidance.
- Mental health support for those in crisis will be still be available.
- Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT) 0-19 service will continue to provide a Safeguarding SPOC service for all staff including the MASH and are taking actions to ensure this will be maintained if there is a reduction in capacity. The 0-19 service will continue to prioritise safeguarding meetings including strategies, ICPCs and RCPCs and core groups, and will use digital methods to maintain representation. Home visits for new babies, (Primary Visits) and visits to children and young people subject to a child protection plan will be maintained. Review Health Assessments will continue on a virtual or face to face basis, dependant on an assessment of cumulative risk.
- Looked After Children's (LAC) Health Assessments are a statutory duty and will continue to be delivered. However, changes for Initial Health Assessments (IHA's) are required in order to deliver assessments safely to patients and protect staff. It is possible that changes to workforce as a result of staff deployment and absence may result in delays in meeting the statutory timescales for the child/young person to be assessed (20 working days from entering care) but there will be regular communications with our partners on this issue.
- The CCG and Health partners have established mechanisms for regular information sharing for any concerns.
- GP's will be providing primary care health input as needed within the guidance from Public Health England and are a key source of advice and information for multiagency processes.

Durham Constabulary have implemented the following:

- Developed business continuity plans which involve a tiered response to demand and resourcing levels. Overall, the plan aims to ensure at times of highest demand, business critical functions such as dealing with 999 calls, responding to the most serious incidents and investigating the most serious crimes continue. This is a flexible model which may change daily or even hourly.

- A strong commitment by the Constabulary to maintain safeguarding children and vulnerable adults as a priority. This includes prioritising investigations where there are imminent risks of harm. As resources become more challenged, it is likely that investigators and supervisors will be pooled so that partners may not always be dealing with teams with which they have become familiar.
- Contingency plans include continued information and decision making and safety planning by the Central Referral Unit working within the MASHs, continuing with MARAC, MAPPA, the management of Registered Sex Offenders and providing services for victims through the Sexual Assault Referral Centre. Work in each of these areas will be prioritised in line with levels of risk and harm.
- More detailed plans are being developed to adapt how we work with health colleagues, HM Coroner and other agencies in dealing with sudden and unexpected deaths of both adults and children.
- In relation to the most recent announcement from the Prime Minister (23rd March 2020) regarding minimising social gathering and restricting movement, the Constabulary is working with the Government to consider how these rules can most effectively be enforced and will seek to work closely with our communities to ensure that people know what is expected of them. Officers will be continuing respond to emergencies and deal with serious crime.

Partnership Business unit has implemented the following:

- We have agreed to cancel all non-urgent partnership meetings (sub-groups, task and finish groups etc.) as well as multi-agency training sessions for the foreseeable time. We will conduct as much of the business as is feasible via e-mail or conference facility where possible when it is possible to do so.
- The Partnership business unit will continue to work throughout and are contactable on the usual e-mail addresses (details shown below).
- We can assure you that we are all working closely together to get through this and will continue to review our contingency plans and staffing capacity and will keep you updated. In the meantime, we would like to thank you all for all the work and support you are providing to support our children, vulnerable adults and their families during this very challenging time.

What staff and volunteers should do if they have any concerns about a child

If school staff, staff from another school, or volunteers have any concerns about a child, they should:

- report their concern directly to the DSL on site
- use the contact details provided to report their concern to the DSL (or deputy) working from home
- report their concern to the senior leader on site so that they can liaise with the DSL off site

ALL concerns passed to the designated safeguarding lead using CPOMS or must be written, signed and dated on the relevant green '*Concern*' form, which can be found in the staff room.

Concerns should be addressed in accordance with section 3.5 of the main child protection policy.

If the DSL is not on site, written concerns should be stored securely until a DSL, or other trained professional can retrieve the report. These written reports can be uploaded / attached to the CPOMS system at a later date.

Staff and volunteers should act immediately on any safeguarding concerns and not wait to discuss concerns with the DSL in person.

What staff and volunteers should do if they have concerns about a staff member or volunteer who may pose a safeguarding risk to children

The principles in part 4 of KCSIE will continue to support how school responds to any such concerns.

Designated safeguarding leads (DSLs)

The optimal scenario for any school providing care for children is to have a trained DSL or deputy available on site. It is recognised this may not be possible, and where this is the case one of the following will be in place:

- one of our DSLs will be available to be contacted via phone or online video whilst working from home
- a trained DSL from another school within the local authority will be available via phone or online video

Where a trained DSL or deputy is not on site, in addition to one of the above options, a senior leader will take responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site. This might include updating and managing access to child protection files, liaising with the offsite DSL (or deputy) and as required liaising with children's social workers where they require access to children in need and/or to carry out statutory assessments at the school.

Whatever the scenario, it is important that all school staff and volunteers have access to a trained DSL or deputy and know on any given day who that person is and how to speak to them. There will be clear guidance provided to staff on site indicating how to contact DSL and deputy. DSL contact details will be stored securely with pupils' emergency details.

It is acknowledged that face to face DSL training is very unlikely to take place during this period and online training will be explored with the support of Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership.

For the period COVID-19 measures are in place, a DSL (or deputy) who has been trained will continue to be classed as a trained DSL (or deputy) even if they miss their refresher training.

Vulnerable children

Ensuring that vulnerable children remain protected is a top priority for the government. Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with EHC plans, read more in the [guidance on vulnerable children and young people](#) for further information.

The Local Authority have the key day-to-day responsibility for delivery of children's social care. Social workers and the Virtual Schools Head will continue to work with vulnerable children in this difficult period and should support these children to access this provision. There is an expectation that children with a social worker will attend provision, unless in consultation with the child's social worker and family it is agreed this is not in the best interests of the child.

Those with an EHC plan will be risk-assessed in consultation with the Local Authority and parents, to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a school place in order to meet their needs,

or whether they can safely have their needs met at home. This could include, if necessary, carers, therapists or clinicians visiting the home to provide any essential services. Many children and young people with EHC plans can safely remain at home.

Eligibility for free school meals in itself should not be the determining factor in assessing vulnerability.

Senior leaders, especially DSLs (and deputies) know who are most vulnerable children are and have the flexibility to offer a place to those on the edge of receiving children's social care support.

School staff should continue to work with and support children's social workers to help protect vulnerable children. This will be especially important during the COVID-19 period.

Staff training and safeguarding induction

All existing school staff have already had safeguarding training and have read part 1 of KCSIE. It is important for these staff that they have an awareness of any new local arrangements, so they know what to do if they are worried about a child.

Where new staff are recruited, or new volunteers enter school, they should continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction. Our full child protection policy will support this process as will part 1 of KCSIE.

We recognise that our existing school workforce may move between schools on a temporary basis in response to COVID-19. The receiving school will judge, on a case-by-case basis, the level of safeguarding induction required.

In most cases, the existing workforce will already have received appropriate safeguarding training and all they will require is a copy of the receiving setting's child protection policy, confirmation of local processes and confirmation of DSL arrangements.

Children moving schools

If our children are attending another setting, it will be important for our school to do whatever we reasonably can to provide the receiving institution with any relevant welfare and child protection information. This will be especially important where children are vulnerable.

For looked-after children, any change in school should be led and managed by the Virtual School Head with responsibility for the child. The receiving institution should be aware of the reason the child is vulnerable and any arrangements in place to support them. As a minimum the receiving institution should, as appropriate, have access to a vulnerable child's EHC plan, child in need plan, child protection plan or, for looked-after children, their personal education plan and know who the child's social worker (and, for looked-after children, who the responsible VSH is). This should ideally happen before a child arrives and, where that is not possible as soon as reasonably practicable.

Any exchanges of information will ideally happen at DSL (or deputy) level, and likewise between special educational needs co-ordinators/named individual with oversight of SEN provision for children with EHC plans. However, it is acknowledged this may not always be possible. Where this is the case senior leaders should take responsibility.

Whilst we must continue to have appropriate regard to data protection and GDPR this does not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Further advice about information sharing can be found at paragraphs 76-83 of KCSIE.

Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff

It remains essential that people who are unsuitable are not allowed to enter the children's workforce or gain access to children. If recruiting new staff, we will continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes for our school, including, as appropriate, relevant sections in part 3 of KCSIE.

In response to COVID-19, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has made changes to its [guidance on standard and enhanced DBS ID checking](#) to minimise the need for face-to-face contact.

Where our school utilises volunteers, we will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in paragraphs 167 to 172 of KCSIE. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

Regarding members of the school workforce already engaging in regulated activity and who already have the appropriate DBS check, there is no expectation that a new DBS check should be obtained where that member of the workforce temporarily moves to another school or college to support the care of children.

The type of setting on the DBS check, for example a specific category of school, is not a barrier. The same principle applies if childcare workers move to work temporarily in a school setting. The receiving institution should risk assess as they would for a volunteer (see above).

Whilst the onus remains on our school to satisfy ourselves that someone in our setting has had the required checks, including as required those set out in part 3 of KCSIE, in the above scenario this can be achieved, if the receiving institution chooses to, via seeking assurance from the current employer rather than requiring new checks.

Schools must continue to follow their legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult. Full details can be found at paragraph 163 of KCSIE.

Schools and colleges should continue to consider and make referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) as per paragraph 166 of KCSIE and the TRA's '[Teacher misconduct advice for making a referral](#)'. During the COVID-19 period all referrals should be made by emailing Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk.

All referrals received by the TRA will continue to be considered. Where referrals on serious safeguarding matters are received and it is deemed that there is a public interest in doing so consideration will be given as to whether an interim prohibition order (IPO) should be put in place. The TRA will continue to progress all cases but will not schedule any hearings at the current time.

Whilst acknowledging the challenge of the current environment, it is essential from a safeguarding perspective that any school or college is aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers will be in the school or college, and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in regulated activity. As such, we will continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in paragraphs 148 to 156 in KCSIE.

Mental health

Negative experiences and distressing life events, such as the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents. Teachers should be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home. The department for education is providing separate guidance on providing education remotely.

Where we are providing care for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, we will ensure appropriate support is in place for them. Department for Education guidance on mental health and behaviour in schools outlines how mental health issues can bring about changes in a young person's behaviour or emotional state which can be displayed in a range of different ways, and that can be an indication of an underlying problem.

Support for pupils in the current circumstances can include existing provision in the school (although this may be delivered in different ways, for example over the phone) or from specialist staff or support services. You can read the guidance on [mental health and behaviour in schools](#).

As circumstances change, it is likely that children and staff will be at a higher risk of experiencing a bereavement within their community or family network. If this arises, the Local Authority Educational Psychology Service will support school to provide support for staff, children and their families.

Supporting children not in school

Our school is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its Children and Young people.

Where the DSL has identified a child to be on the edge of social care support, or who would normally receive pastoral-type support in school, they should ensure that a robust communication plan is in place for that child or young person.

Details of this plan must be recorded on CPOMS should a record of contact have made. The communication plans can include; remote contact, phone contact, door-step visits. Other individualised contact methods should be considered and recorded.

The school and its DSL will work closely with all stakeholders to maximise the effectiveness of any communication plan. This plan must be reviewed regularly and where concerns arise, the DSL will consider any referrals as appropriate.

The school will share safeguarding messages on its website and social media pages.

Our school recognises that school is a protective factor for children and young people, and the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents/carers. Staff at school need to be aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home. We will ensure that where we care for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, we ensure appropriate support is in place for them. This will be bespoke to each child and recorded on CPOMS where necessary.

Online safety in school

It will be more important than ever that schools provide a safe environment, including online. Our school will continue to ensure that appropriate filters and monitoring systems (read [guidance on what "appropriate" looks like](#)) are in place to protect children when they are online on the school's IT systems or recommended resources. Our school continues to be supported by Local Authority staff who have the technical knowledge to maintain safe IT arrangements.

The [UK Council for Internet Safety provides information to help governing boards assure themselves](#) that any new arrangements continue to effectively safeguard children online.

The [UK Safer Internet Centre's professional online safety helpline](#) also provides support for the children's workforce with any online safety issues they face. The Local Authority can also continue to provide support.

Children and online safety away from school

We continue to do what we reasonably can to keep all of our children safe. In most cases, the majority of children are not be physically attending school.

It is important that all staff who interact with children, including online, continue to look out for signs a child may be at risk. Any such, concerns should be dealt with as per the child protection policy and where appropriate referrals should still be made to children's social care and as required the police.

The department for education is providing separate guidance on providing education remotely. It will set out 4 key areas that leaders should consider as part of any remote learning strategy. This includes the use of technology.

Recently published [guidance from the UK Safer Internet Centre on safe remote learning](#) and from the [London Grid for Learning on the use of videos and livestreaming](#) can help support staff to plan online lessons and/or activities and plan them safely.

All schools should consider the safety of their children when they are asked to work online. The starting point for online teaching will follow the same principles as set out in the school's staff code of conduct and acceptable use policy. These policies include, amongst other things, acceptable use of technologies, staff pupil/student relationships and communication including the use of social media. The policy applies equally to any existing or new online and distance learning arrangements which are introduced.

School staff should seek support from the local authority, where necessary, when planning online lessons/ activities and considering online safety.

We will ensure that any use of online learning tools and systems is in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

An essential part of the online planning process will be ensuring children who are being asked to work online have very clear reporting routes in place so they can raise any concerns whilst online. As well as reporting routes back to the school this should also signpost children to age appropriate practical support from the likes of:

- [Childline](#) - for support
- [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) - to report and remove harmful online content
- [CEOP](#) - for advice on making a report about online abuse

Below are some things to consider when delivering virtual lessons, especially where webcams are involved:

- No 1:1s, groups only
- Staff and children must wear suitable clothing, as should anyone else in the household.
- Any computers used should be in appropriate areas, for example, not in bedrooms; and the background should be blurred.
- The live class should be recorded so that if any issues were to arise, the video can be reviewed.
- Live classes should be kept to a reasonable length of time, or the streaming may prevent the family 'getting on' with their day.
- Language must be professional and appropriate, including any family members in the background.

- Staff must only use platforms provided by the school to communicate with pupils
- Staff should record, the length, time, date and attendance of any sessions held.

Communications with parents and carers will be used to reinforce the importance of children being safe online. It will be especially important for parents and carers to be aware of what their children are being asked to do online, including the sites they will be asked to access and be clear who from the school (if anyone) their child is going to be interacting with online.

Parents and carers may choose to supplement the school online offer with support from online companies and in some cases individual tutors. In their communications with parents and carers, schools should emphasise the importance of securing online support from a reputable organisation /individual who can provide evidence that they are safe and can be trusted to have access to children.

Support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online includes:

- [Internet matters](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- [London Grid for Learning](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- [Net-aware](#) - for support for parents and carers from the NSPCC
- [Parent info](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- [Thinkuknow](#) - for advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online
- [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) - advice for parents and carers

The department encourages schools and colleges to share this support with parents and carers.

Peer on peer abuse

Given the very different circumstances schools are operating in, a revised process may be required for managing any report of such abuse and supporting victims.

Where a school receives a report of peer on peer abuse, they will follow the principles as set out in part 5 of KCSIE and of those outlined within of the Child Protection Policy. The school will listen and work with the young person, parents/carers and any multiagency partner required to ensure the safety and security of that young person.

Concerns and actions must be recorded and appropriate referrals made.