

P&C COVID-19 EMERGENCY PLANNING HIGHLIGHT REPORT

SERVICE AREA:	Children and Safeguarding
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REPORTING PERIOD:	To week ending 7 th May 2020

KEY ACTIVITY HEADLINES

- There has been little change since the last highlight report;
 - Our programme of prioritised face to face visiting to most vulnerable children and young people continues;
 - Other visiting taking place virtually using social media;
 - Some visiting is taking place less frequently than previously where this is proportionate;
 - Links between early help services and community hubs established;
 - Schools continuing to offer excellent support to children who are vulnerable and those of key workers;
- Various approaches are being piloted in order to maintain engagement with children and families, and some of these are proving to be successful;
- Our early help services are, for example, trialling virtual drop-in sessions where parents can ask parenting advice. It is clear for some parents that this model of support works better for them than more traditional approaches;
- Similarly, we are finding that many young people prefer virtual engagement to face to face visits and many of the staff working with them find that the quality of the engagement is better as well;
- There are clearly some positives about the way that we have needed to change service delivery that we will want to keep post lock-down.

RISKS / CHALLENGES (AND MITIGATION)

- **Ensuring we have sufficient resources to manage any increase in referrals**
We are working with our partners to model our response to any increase in referrals that begin to take place once schools begin returning. As noted in previous highlight reports, referral rates have been low as children are mostly not in school. As is the case after the summer school holidays, we expect an increase in referrals of children. We may, however, have fewer staff available in the teams that would usually manage this if shielding arrangements are continuing for those with additional health vulnerabilities, for example. We are therefore looking at possible options that include the potential for some limited redeployment and/or limited additional staffing.

WORKFORCE UPDATE

- Workforce availability steady in both authorities;
- Morale remains very good;
- Staff continue to go above and beyond to maintain contact with families and children.

FINANCIAL IMPACT (increase in costs / reduction in income)

Unchanged:

- A few placements where additional costs have been incurred have taken place, which are being captured through our access to resources team;
- Longer term the risks are that there is a shortage of Independent Fostering Agency placements as demand returns to usual levels, which may result in greater use of residential placements;
- There is also a risk that any spike in demand resulting from more children being referred after the lockdown period ends may require additional temporary staff in our front door, assessment teams as well as in early help services.

RECOVERY ACTIVITY (plans being considered / future steps)

- As noted above, we are beginning to model how we would manage any increase in demand as the lock-down eases.
- We are fortunate to have a member of staff seconded to the LA from Ofsted to assist us in developing recovery plans and to help us to think about how we can retain the best of the learning and practice from the changes that Covid-19 has brought.

COMMUNICATIONS

Regular communications as part of business as usual.