

COVID-19 EMERGENCY PLANNING HIGHLIGHT REPORT

SERVICE AREAS:	Children and Safeguarding
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REPORTING PERIOD:	Week ending 19 th June 2020

NEW GUIDANCE AND IMPACT

- New guidance from Government re “Safe working in education, childcare and children’s social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE)” published on 16.6.20. Awaiting recommendations from PH about implications for staff
- “Recommendations to achieve best practice in the child protection and family justice systems: Special guardianship orders June 2020” was also published this week by the Public Law Working Group. This will have positive implications for children, but will need some amendments to practice.

NEW CHALLENGES AND ACTIVITY

- Working with Education colleagues to utilise outdoor learning centre Grafham Water to support children in and on the edge of care
- Renewal of the Best Start in Life initiative
- Renewal of the Isos Partnership work around redefining services for older children and adolescents
- Partners in Practice visit to CCC Fostering Service

RECOVERY ACTIVITY

- We have designed proposals about how some services might begin to re-open or change delivery models following the easing of the lock-down and predicted continued easing over weeks and months to come, including:
 - Looking at how we can safely enable more direct face-to-face contact between children in care and their parents;
 - How we can start to hold hybrid meetings in respect of family and youth courts; child protection conferences; public law outline meetings; and some CIN meetings;
 - Thinking about how we can ensure social distancing as some community services such as child and family centres begin to open in the coming months;
 - Thinking about how we support more of our staff begin to return and support those who remain in higher risk categories
 - How we ensure that service users are able to access buildings safely as needed

These plans have been developed carefully and in accordance with the developing guidance published by Government. We have liaised closely with colleagues in property services, and have carried out extensive planning around the requirements for each building, led by the AD for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance. These have been submitted for consideration.

- Discussions around modelling work for future demand and projections of potential pressures on the system underway
- Longer term recovery planning underway with report due mid July

DECISIONS MADE SINCE LAST REPORTING PERIOD

None

NEW FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS SINCE LAST REPORTING PERIOD

Unchanged:

- A few placements where additional costs have been incurred have taken place, which are being captured through our access to resources team

- Increasingly noticeable that the children in the community that are more likely to be coming into care earlier than anticipated are those with complex needs, and packages to retain them at home are very costly, again captured through the access to resources team
- Some concerns about small but concerning numbers of young people involved in YOS services and possible criminal exploitation may require high cost placements
- 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

WORKFORCE CHANGES

- Workforce availability steady in both authorities and recruitment has continued successfully; a new ASYE recruitment assessment centre will be held at the end of the month
- Morale remains very good, although staff are increasingly asking to return to offices at least once a week
- Staff continue to go above and beyond to maintain contact with families and children

COMMUNICATIONS

- Regular communication as part of normal business.
- Communication specific to CCC Fostering staff about successful visit from Essex Partners in Practice this week.