

COVID-19 EMERGENCY PLANNING HIGHLIGHT REPORT

SERVICE AREAS:	Children and Safeguarding
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REPORTING PERIOD:	Week ending 3 rd July 2020

NEW GUIDANCE AND IMPACT

- As mentioned briefly previously, Government has released new guidance on safe working including the use of personal protective equipment in children's social care settings. This includes advice and guidance to cover fostering households and other settings where direct care is provided to children.
- The guidance does not appear to materially change any current working practices, but Public Health colleagues are in the process of reviewing the content to confirm that this is the case.

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. The facility has helpfully provided accommodation and some day care [to support fragile placements] for a small number of Cambridgeshire children and young people in care.
- Despite the challenges of remote working and social distancing, a Partners in Practice review of Cambridgeshire's fostering service led by Essex County Council took place in June; a report with recommendations will follow.
- The review commissioned from the organisation, ISOS, into how partner agencies in both authorities can improve support to vulnerable older children and young people at risk of involvement in criminal or sexual exploitation, is continuing to make progress, again despite the challenges of social distancing and remote working.

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 and we are now moving to the implementation phase.

The children's workforce across both local authorities has been organised into 'squads', enabling a return to work on a rota basis, enabling social distancing within buildings.

We are moving on to exploring how we can re-start face to face meetings where parental and child engagement is most important including, for example, child protection conferences.
- A recovery/reset plan for children's services is being developed and will be available at the end of July 2020.

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.