

P&C COVID-19 EMERGENCY PLANNING HIGHLIGHT REPORT

SERVICE AREA:	Children and Safeguarding
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REPORTING PERIOD:	To week ending 5 th June 2020

KEY ACTIVITY HEADLINES

- While there has been little practical change since the last report, we are increasingly preparing for services to slowly re-open, and for the gradual return to school for some children. In the meantime we continue to:
 - prioritise face to face visiting to our most vulnerable children and young people;
 - undertake some visiting less frequently and/or use social media, and
 - ensure that links between our early help services and the community hubs are maintained.
- We are beginning to think 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;
 - Thinking about how we might ensure social distancing as some community services such as child and family centres begin to open in the coming months;
 - Thinking about how we can ensure that social distancing can be maintained in our offices as 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 need to be developed carefully and in accordance with the developing guidance published by Government. We are therefore liaising 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.

RISKS / CHALLENGES (AND MITIGATION)

- **Ensuring we have sufficient resources to manage any increase in referrals**
This first week with the schools re-opening to more children has not led to any really noticeable increase in the demand this week. Numbers of contacts had been gradually increasing in May, and we think this slow uptick will continue as the gradual re-opening builds.
- **Prioritising the return of children to school according to vulnerability:** As schools re-open, we are working with colleagues in the virtual school and in education to ensure that those children who are most vulnerable are the first to begin returning, given the capacity issues that schools will have, particularly in the early stages of any return.

WORKFORCE UPDATE

- Workforce availability steady in both authorities and recruitment continues;
- 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;

- 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;
- 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, and how we can adopt some of the useful practice changes to ensure that we continue to prioritise the right children.
- Also as noted above, we are now beginning to think about how we can prepare some of our services to re-start while maintaining social distancing in preparation for the lock-down arrangements easing further.

COMMUNICATIONS

Regular communications as part of business as usual.