

P&C COVID-19 EMERGENCY PLANNING HIGHLIGHT REPORT

SERVICE AREA:	Children and Safeguarding
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REPORTING PERIOD:	To week ending 17 th April

KEY ACTIVITY HEADLINES

- Our programme of prioritised face to face visiting to most vulnerable children and young people continues;
- Other visiting taking pace 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;
- Some flexibility to definition of vulnerability to include higher risk children open to early help which is particularly supportive.

RISKS / CHALLENGES (AND MITIGATION)

- Low rates of referrals of children continue, as is case nationally and regionally;
- Low numbers of vulnerable children accessing school places despite best efforts, as is case nationally and regionally. Mitigation for both includes asking safeguarding board and community hubs to ensure they are referring on as needed;
- Likely to be a significant increase in referrals once services begin to return to normal and children are being seen by universal services;
- Some further clarification on use of PPE being sought following indications that local health staff will use for all home visits. Public Health England advice is that PPE is not required except where providing direct personal care but National Health national position appears different. This could cause confusion for families as well as for staff. Mitigation: On-going clarification being sought.

WORKFORCE UPDATE

- Workforce availability steady in both authorities with percentage actually off sick at around 5% level in most service areas [although more who are having to self-isolate because of underlying conditions];
- Morale seems to remain generally good.

FINANCIAL IMPACT (increase in costs / reduction in income)

- A few placements where additional costs have been incurred have taken place, including the consequence of early release for some offending young people for whom a return to family has not been possible. These 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 and assessment teams.

RECOVERY ACTIVITY (plans being considered / future steps)

- The eastern region of association of directors of children's services is asking all local authorities to develop recovery plans to replace the self-assessment process.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Regular communications only as part of business as usual.