



## **COVID-19: Multi-agency update – Managing risk to vulnerable children**

This briefing document sets out up to date guidance for practitioners in line with current national guidance and the [Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Procedures](#). Additional measures set out below accompany the specific sections of the local procedures - [Making a referral to Children's Social Care](#), [S47 procedures](#), [CRE & Missing Procedures](#) and guidance on the [DDSCP website](#)

At this challenging time it is vitally important that agencies continue to work together and share relevant safeguarding information to keep children safe. **For further information on the Derby and Derbyshire multi-agency arrangements for responding to safeguarding concerns please visit the DDSCP website [here](#)**

### **Support for Vulnerable Children**

The government has asked parents/carers to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend. It is important to underline that schools, all childcare settings (including early years' settings, childminders and providers of childcare for school-age children), colleges and other educational establishments, remain safe places for children.

Schools, and all childcare providers, are therefore being asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children - children who are vulnerable, and children whose parents/carers are critical to the Covid-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home. Schools will also want to support other children facing social difficulties.

The Department for Education's (DfE's) [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance on vulnerable children and young people](#) defines 'vulnerable children' as those who:

- who are supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs, including child in need plans, on child protection plans, 'looked after' children, young carers, disabled children; and
- children and young people up to the age of 25 with [education, health and care \(EHC\) plans](#).

Eligibility for free school meals in and of itself should not be the determining factor in assessing vulnerability. Please see the latest national guidance on [Free School Meals](#)

### **Monitoring the attendance of vulnerable children**

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend provision, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at severe risk.

The social worker has lead responsibility for reviewing the child in need plan, child protection plan or looked after plan to make sure the circumstances of the vulnerable child have been considered and the arrangements with partner agencies have been updated. Updated plans must set out clearly how the ongoing safety of the child is being maintained and monitored. This includes which school or provision the child should attend.

Updates to the plan will be agreed with parents/carers and practitioners from different agencies who are involved in keeping a child safe. (The principles set out below for education settings equally apply for **any other setting** that a child should attend as part of the plan agreed to keep them safe.)

Where parents/carers are concerned about the risk of the child contracting the virus, the school or social worker should talk through these anxieties with the parent/carer following the advice set out by Public Health England.

Social workers and school/education providers should agree with families whether vulnerable children should be attending education provision. This will include arrangements for a child to attend a different setting during temporary closure of their school as a result of local restrictions arising from COVID-19.

To support parents/carers, the school/college will confirm emergency contact numbers are correct and ask for any additional emergency contact numbers where they are available.

**The school/education provider will follow up on any pupil that they were expecting to attend, who does not.**

In the first instance the school/education provider should contact the parents/carers to find out where the child is. **In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at school, is absent or discontinues, the school/education provider must notify the child's social worker.**

Social workers and their managers have a key responsibility to make professional judgements of risk for vulnerable children and decide what form of contact a family may need to have by agencies (including the social worker) in order to ensure the safety of children and young people. These judgements should be informed by up to date information from education, health and other practitioners working with families illustrating changing risks, protective factors and other issues. There are many ways to keep in touch with a child, young person or family without physical face-to-face contact.

There are circumstances where it will be necessary for social workers and other staff/agencies practitioners to visit children in person. Where face-to-face work is deemed necessary, practitioners should take account of their own agencies guidance and Public Health England (PHE) advice on [social distancing](#) and minimising the spread of infection to keep safe both themselves and the family they are visiting.

Where social workers and other staff/agencies are undertaking home visits, PPE is not required unless the people being visited are symptomatic of coronavirus (COVID-19) or have a confirmed diagnosis of coronavirus (COVID-19). Where coronavirus (COVID-19) is suspected or confirmed, those undertaking the visit should use PPE in line with their own agencies guidance and the latest guidance from [Public Health England \(PHE\)](#).

### **Support for schools and other settings**

Advice is being sent regularly to schools in Derby and Derbyshire and includes the new template addendum for school safeguarding procedures updated with government COVID-19 guidance.

For the continuing role of educational establishments see [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for schools and other educational settings](#)

- For updates on the latest position on Early Help, Children in Need and for Core Group/Team around the Family meetings for Derby City and Derbyshire please visit the DDSCP website [here](#)
- For updates on the latest position on Children at Risk of Exploitation and Missing for Derby City and Derbyshire please visit the DDSCP website [here](#)
- For updates on the latest position for Child Protection Conferences and medicals for Derby City and Derbyshire please visit the DDSCP website [here](#)

**Information and support is available for Derbyshire schools on COVID-19, Childrens Services and Early Years and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Risk Mitigation via [schoolsnet](#).**

**Information and support is available for Derby City Schools on COVID-19 via the daily briefing from the Quality, Standards and Performance Team.**

### **Helpful Resources**

Following the introduction of the Coronavirus Act, Tri.x has created an additional [COVID Standalone Resource](#) which contains relevant changes and information as they relate to key procedures. This information should NOT be used as a substitute for [DDSCP Safeguarding Procedures](#).

[COVID-19: guidance for the public on mental health and wellbeing](#)

[Guidance for parents and carers on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)

[Guidance on social distancing for everyone in the UK, including children, and protecting older people and vulnerable people](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance on vulnerable children and young people](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for children's social care services](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): implementing social distancing in education and childcare settings](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): early years and childcare closures](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers](#)

[Children in alternative provision \(AP\) settings](#)