



COVID-19: Multi-agency update – Responding to safeguarding concerns

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](#) and [S47 procedures](#)

At this challenging time it is vitally important that agencies continue to work together and share relevant safeguarding information to keep children safe

• Contacts & Referrals

If you are concerned about the welfare of a child or young person or are worried they are being abused, you should [make a referral to Children's Social Care](#). Wherever practicable, contact should be indirect, such as by telephone/video call or using the online referral form via [Derby Children's Social Care Online Referral System](#) or [Derbyshire Starting Point](#).

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

• Assessment: Early Help and Children in Need (CIN)

Unless there are serious concerns that a child is suffering or likely to suffer abuse and maltreatment, practitioners should use an Early Help Assessment to start the process of understanding the needs and strengths of the child and the parent / carers. Staff from all agencies have a responsibility to make professional judgements regarding what form of contact a family may need to have by their own agency.

For updates on the latest position on CIN & Early Help and for Core Group/TAF meetings for Derby City and Derbyshire please visit the DDSCP website [here](#)

Professional Judgements about visiting children and families to complete children in need assessments will balance considerations about:

- risks to children and young people
- risks to families
- risks to the workforce

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 professionals 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 [Public Health England \(PHE\) guidance](#).

• Strategy discussions

Strategy discussions should be held by virtual means in order to co-operate with social distancing guidance requirements. The purpose of the strategy discussion / meeting is to determine the child's welfare and plan rapid future action if there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, Significant Harm.

- **Child Protection Section 47 Enquiries**

Preparation for carrying out a [S47 enquiry](#) should include specific measures to see or speak to the child in line with [local safeguarding procedures](#).

Children and families may feel anxious about infection risks. Where this anxiety is present and families are reluctant to engage with social workers, social workers and other agency practitioners should make contact with families and explain why it is essential that they have access to the home, or to see and speak to the children, to ensure they are safe and well. This need not always be through a face-to-face visit, but should be sufficient to reassure key professionals that the child is not currently at risk of harm.

There may, of course, be other reasons why families may refuse access and where they do and there is a risk to the life of the child or a likelihood of immediate serious harm, Derby and Derbyshire local authorities should follow the immediate protection procedures set out in [working together to safeguard children](#).

The management of risk should be recorded in line with the organisation's Risk Mitigation plan for COVID19

For updates on the latest position on Children at Risk of Exploitation for Derby City and Derbyshire please visit the DDSCP website [here](#)

- **Child Protection Conferences**

Multi-agency child protection conferences will be held using technologies such as conference telephone / video calls to enable contact to be indirect.

For updates on the latest position for Child Protection Conferences and medicals for Derby City and Derbyshire please visit the DDSCP website [here](#)

- **Remote Working and Use of Technology**

Whilst many staff will be working remotely during the coronavirus outbreak, it is important to note that personal data must at all times continue to be processed and stored in accordance with Data Protection principles.

[Data Protection and Coronavirus: What You Need to Know](#) (Information Commissioner's Office)

You should not use personal devices to communicate with service-users, store personal data on personal devices or download and use apps onto work or personal devices (phones/laptops/tablet computers) without referring to your own organisation's policy/guidance on technology.

When using video calls consider beforehand the following best practice:

- All parties have prepared for the call (if possible) and are suitably dressed in an appropriate location;
- If privacy is needed to talk to a child or carer, how this will be raised and where should it happen?

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. Tri.x will now be adding a link to this resource from our [DDSCP online procedures manual](#). This information should NOT be used as a substitute for local directives and practitioners (regardless of setting) should contact their line manager for their organisation's latest guidance.

Royal college of paediatrics and child health COVID-19 – [guidance for paediatric services](#)

[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](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): an easy-read guide to looking after your feelings and your body](#)

[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](#)

