

COVID 19 Safeguarding Policy Supplement

School roles have been changing since April 2020 from providing educational provision on site to providing child care arrangements to a limited number of children along with distance learning. From 29th June 2020, the role will be changing again to provide face to face schooling for up to a third of school pupils at any one time along with continuing to develop the distance learning.

Introduction

There is a legal duty placed upon all staff that work within educational establishments to report both adults at risk and children at risk. This duty continues during these times to ensure that key process are undertaken within a period of restrictions, the Local Authority has made changes to the way they are carried out. These will impact on school staff attending case conferences, core groups, LAC reviews, etc. Please also see the LAC Policy for more information on changes.

A child is anyone under the age of 18. A “child at risk” is a child who:

- (a) is experiencing or is at risk of abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm, and
- (b) has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs).

An “adult at risk” is an adult who:

- (a) is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect,
- (b) has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs), and
- (c) as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it

Staff in the schools or working from home

Keeping Learners Safe Guidance (2015) by the Welsh Government is still to be used and staff should familiarise themselves with this guidance. All staff need to be made aware of and comply with the current All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008 (The Regional Safeguarding Board are in the process of agreeing the implementation process for the Wales Safeguarding Procedures). A refresher of the

school policy would also be strongly advisable including emphasis on any areas of change.

As changes occur then all staff must be updated of those changes.

Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP)

There must be a trained DSP or Deputy DSP present on site whilst the school is open. This person should be noted on the Welsh Government poster located at the entry of the school.

Concerns/disclosures

It is important for staff to pass on any concerns that they have immediately to the DSP. As mentioned in the introduction, there is a legal duty on staff to do so. Staff should do this in line with their normal policy and guidance provided in training.

The DSP must then make the decision whether this reaches the threshold for a child protection referral. This referral process is covered in the All Wales Child Protection Procedures. There has been no change made due to Covid 19. The DSP will usually decide whether to make a referral to social services, but it is important to note that any staff member can refer their concerns to social services or the police directly.

The DSP must contact Children's/Social Services as soon as a problem, suspicion or concern about a child becomes apparent, on [insert telephone number].

Children's/Social Services are open [insert times]. The Out Of Hours number is [insert telephone number]. Phone referrals must be followed up with a written referral within 2 days. If there is an immediate risk of harm to an individual then the Police should be called on 999.

Allegations against Staff

If anybody sees anything that concerns them about the behaviour of a member of staff, then this must be reported immediately to the Headteacher. If the concern is regarding the behaviour of the Headteacher then the member of staff must contact their Chair of Governors, if they're not available then the relevant Local Authority

officer should be contacted on [insert telephone number]. The Local Authority Officer will then advise on the next steps to be taken. If the concern reaches the threshold then the staff member with the concern will need to contact Children's/Social Services [insert telephone number] to make the referral. If the Local Authority Officer is unavailable then contact must be made without delay to Children's/Social Services on [insert telephone number].

Site Security

SLT must ensure appropriate site security is in place and that children are appropriately supervised, including when playing outside.

Due to the possibility of multiple entries and exit points in the school building, the Head must ensure that these points are managed safely.

Children not attending the school

Schools may have concerns about children who are not currently attending school. Headteachers must make sure that they put suitable arrangements in place to support all children but especially those they have concerns about.

Whilst staff are involved in the distance learning of children they must be aware of the Distance Learning Policy. The policy goes through things to look out for when using Teams or Google Meet.

If staff are made aware of any safeguarding concern regarding a child or adult who is not required to attend the school, they must follow the same referral process above.

Further information about Education safeguarding guidance during the coronavirus pandemic can be found on the Welsh Government website [here](#)

Changes to the Practice Standards in regard to some Child Protection Process

There has been local guidance produced which stipulates arrangements around the completion of statutory visits and meetings during the period of time when children's service is impacted by the effects of Corona virus COVID19. These practices are temporary and do not replace the service practice standards. Below are the changes

in the way that social workers will be carrying out their duties and expectations on schools in the process.

Working of cases and provision of services

Children and families Service acknowledge that during this period the working on cases and the provision of services will change.

Arrangements have to be made to contact the family, children and young people over the phone or skype. The frequency of these phone calls might vary dependent on need and what families will want. They will keep families informed and aim to make sure that families feel supported during this time.

Up to date information on support services will be provided to families.

Families may be anxious that certain services have been postponed or paused. Every effort will be made to reassure families that interventions will either continue virtually or over the phone or will be re arranged at some point in the future.

Completion of Section 47 enquiries.

Step 1: Conduct strategy meeting or discussion via phone or skype.

Step 2: Plan the investigation. Under the current circumstances consideration will be given to the following,

- Can the child be seen outside of the home the child might be attending school or child care?
- If the child is to be seen in the home and dependent on the reported concerns a decision will be made to either contact the family to ascertain if they are symptomatic of COVID-19 or in circumstances where the pre warning of the family could hinder the investigation or place a child at risk of harm the family should be asked at the doorstep if they are symptomatic.

Step 3: if the family self-report that they are symptomatic, the visit cannot take place. Phone contact by the social worker will need to be increased. If the social worker is of the view that harm is imminent or there is a risk of significant harm they will need to contact the Service Manager for advice.

Step 4: Record the investigation on the section 47 form on WCCIS. It is imperative that this is completed immediately after the investigation to ensure that current information is recorded on file.

Step 5: Record assessment on the part 3 Care and Support assessment form on WCCIS.

Medical examinations: If a child requires a medical examination each case will be discussed with the paediatric secretary or paediatrician on call as per usual.

In Hours:

- If the child is **asymptomatic** and it is felt that examination is required this will be done in the community in the usual way.
- If the child is **symptomatic** (high fever, persistent cough) the doctor will advise. It needs to be prearranged with the hospital. You will be instructed where to go. The child would be seen via the COVID -19 portal.

Out of Hours:

Usual process.

The child will need to be seen on the ward via the COVID-19 portal. There will need to be an arrangement by phone

Completion of visits to children on the child protection register

Step 1: The social worker will plan ahead for the visit. Contact the family to ascertain if they or anyone else within the house are symptomatic of COVID-19

Step 2 if the family self-report that they are symptomatic, the visit cannot take place. Phone contact by the social worker will need to be increased. If the social worker is of the view that harm is imminent or there is a risk of significant harm they will need to contact the Service Manager for advice.

Step 3: Record the visit on the statutory visit form on WCCIS. It is imperative that this is completed immediately after the visit to ensure that current information is recorded on file.

Child Protection Case Conferences (Interim arrangements)

Process

1. The social worker will carry out the s47 enquiry. If they, in consultation with their Practice Lead, conclude that the threshold for holding a child protection case conference is met they inform Business Support that a decision on temporary registration is required and a temporary child protection plan needs to be put in place.
2. Business Support will send out to agencies identified by the social worker as having relevant information to request their written reports. **If asked to provide a report this will be required 24 hours before the date of the “conference”. You will also need to have read/talked through your report with the family.**
3. The letter to the agencies will also have the time and date that the Child Protection Chair /Co-ordinator will be considering the matter. **You will be asked for contact details and availability during this time so that the Child Protection Chair /Co-ordinator will be able to contact you should she have any questions/matters of clarity. You will also be asked what your intervention could be with the family should the child’s name be placed on the register.**
4. These reports will be sent to the invited agencies 24 hours before the date of the conference. Therefore it is essential that the reports are submitted in time.
5. Any questions/queries/observations on these reports need to be provided to the Child Protection Chair /Co-ordinator by date and time of the conference.
6. The decision will be made by the Child Protection Chair / Co-ordinator or Senior Safeguarding manager (not operationally connected to case)
The decision would be based on
 - Examination of available documents, as a minimum the ‘Outcome of s47 enquiries’ document and ‘Social Work Report to Initial Case Conference’ and an outline child protection plan
 - Discussion with social worker and Practice Lead
 - Discussion over the phone where possible with the parents/child
 - Examination of other agencies report
 - Legal advice where required

7. Within 24 hours of the decision made, a record of the decision and the rationale will be sent to the Service Manager (Safeguarding) or the Head of Service: which will be done that same day.
8. The Business Support Officer will ensure that the child's name is added to the Child Protection Register if this is the decision made
9. On the same day as the decision is quality assured, a record of the decision and the rationale will be sent to and sent to the family, key agencies and business support colleagues by the Child Protection Chair / Co-ordinator. This will include an outline child protection plan.

Senior Manager Oversight

10. Where a child's name is placed on the temporary register and subject to a temporary plan, the case will be reviewed every 6 weeks by a Senior Manager (Operational) to ensure it is still justified in interests of safeguarding, for this imposition to continue without decision making of a Conference. The Business Support Officer will schedule time in the Senior Manager (Operational) diary to undertake this review. Their decision will be made known to the Child Protection Chair / Co-ordinator
11. If no longer justified, the proposal to de-register from a Temporary Registration is submitted to the Child Protection Chair / Co-ordinator or Senior Safeguarding manager (not operationally connected to case) who will review the decision and if necessary, trigger an early Review Case Conference.

First Review Case Conference

12. The Local Authority will not make unilateral decisions to remove children's names from the child protection register.
13. At 3 months the Child Protection Chair / Co-ordinator or Senior Safeguarding manager (not operationally connected to case) will be provided with reports by the Social Worker and other agencies part of the Core Group/safeguarding plan – (reports presented to Chair as if this was being held as a traditional Case Conference). Child Protection Chair / Co-ordinator or Senior Safeguarding manager will undertake a desktop review and unless all agencies recommend deregistration at this point the child's name remains on the child protection register.

14. Within 24 hours of the decision made, a record of the desk top review will be made and sent to the family, key agencies and business support colleagues
15. Business Support will ensure that the child's name is removed from the Child Protection Register if this is the decision made

Subsequent Reviews

16. The Local Authority will not make unilateral decisions to remove children's names from the child protection register.
17. At 6 months the Child Protection Chair / Co-ordinator or Senior Safeguarding manager (not operationally connected to case) will be provided with reports by the Social Worker and other agencies part of the Core Group/safeguarding plan – (reports presented to Chair as if this was being held as a traditional Case Conference). Child Protection Chair / Co-ordinator or Senior Safeguarding manager will undertake a desktop review and unless all agencies recommend deregistration at this point the child's name remains on the child protection register.
18. Within 24 hours of the decision made, a record of the desk top review will be made and sent to the family, key agencies and business support colleagues
19. Business Support will ensure that the child's name is removed from the Child Protection Register if this is the decision made.

Virtual Case Conferences

During the period of the current restrictions IOACC have trialled the use of Microsoft Teams as a platform for holding case conferences. The plan is to move to this as the default method during the current period. The decision making in these conferences reverts to the processes contained within the safeguarding procedures.

Core Groups (interim arrangements)

Process

1. Core Groups meetings as actual meetings will cease and replaced by virtual meeting.
2. Core Group meetings will be arranged and put in the diary but no one will physically attend.

- 3. All core group members must provide a reports on progress 24 hours before the date of the core group. These will be shared with the members of the core group.**
4. Where possible all participants will be required to dial or skype into Core Group meeting. If it is not possible to get everyone onto one call, the social worker will need to carry out a number of calls.
5. Social workers will ask agencies to discuss their reports.
6. Social Worker will then have a discussion with the child/parents and update the child protection plan based on all the information collated.

Care and Support planning meetings (interim arrangements)

Planning meetings should be held virtually with every relevant agency contributing either over the phone, email or skype.