

**Director for Early Help and Safeguarding - update**

Thank you to our colleagues in schools who are working hard in very challenging circumstances to maintain educational provision and also to provide a safe haven for children of key workers or those who may be vulnerable due to their family circumstances. Social workers and family support staff are also working hard to provide ongoing support to families and to make sure that vulnerable children continue to be helped and protected in these difficult times. Where it is necessary and appropriate, this includes direct (face to face) contact and support to families. However, to ensure we are following government guidance on social distancing, we are now advising our staff to keep in contact with professionals and families “virtually” wherever possible - for example through skype, whatsapp and telephone. Individual risk assessments are being completed in respect of children subject to child protection planning, child in need/early help and those in the care of the local authority to establish what level and type of visiting and help is required to safeguard their welfare. Multi-agency activity/oversight will be taken into account during this process in order that worker time is deployed to the best effect.

Currently our workforce is remaining strong in spirit although inevitably there are depletions in numbers due to health and wellbeing restrictions which are affecting our workers and their own families. The majority of our workforce are now working from home but have full access to electronic systems and communication routes and are continuing to visit children and families. The home working is to comply with government guidance on social distancing, to reduce the potential of virus contagion through group contact within offices and a number of office sites will close this week.

Child welfare concerns should continue to be referred into Children’s Services through the usual routes and methods wherever possible.

Once again thank you for your support and collaboration at this very difficult time for everyone.

Alison Noble |Service Director for Early Help and Safeguarding|