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To: Headteachers, Principals, Chairs of Governing Boards, FE Colleges and Multi-Academy Chief Executives

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Our ref IP/VB

Your ref

Date 06 April 2020

Dear colleague

Covid-19 - Update

We hope you, your pupils and students, staff and school community are all safe and well.

We were delighted to see the nation's applause on Thursday evening for all of the country's key workers and your staff deserve this. We would like to echo our gratitude and your staff deserve the applause for keeping schools open for children of other key workers and vulnerable young people, including during this Easter period. Thank you.

The feedback to the SchoolsNet updates and letters has been welcomed by many providers. A small minority have asked for further clarification and please contact either of us directly if we can be of any further help.

Derbyshire County Council is in very regular contact with the Department for Education (DfE) and are being very clear with the DfE about what you are asking. Be assured that your feedback is being listened to. We have seen a new Government announcement on Saturday 4 April that free school meals will now be provided over the Easter break and further details will be published this week. We have seen the definition of key workers extended and also much more detailed Ofqual guidance about this year's examination grades. We still anticipate meeting the deadline for the primary offer day, but the DfE acknowledges that they need to continue to consider all of the potential ramifications on admission appeals before they provide further guidance. Please continue to provide us with feedback on areas where you require further clarification. Some of this will require changes to legislation or statutory guidance whereas we may be able to provide answers to other queries.

In the meantime, please find below some answers to some frequently asked questions regarding safeguarding duties. Please read this alongside our letter from 2 April 2020 which is published on SchoolsNet.

1 What is the definition of vulnerable children and young people?

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker, and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with education, health and care (EHC) plans.

Those who have a social worker include children who have a child protection plan, and those who are looked after by the local authority. A child may also be deemed to be vulnerable if they have been assessed as being in need, or otherwise meet the definition in Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

2 Should children and young people with a named social worker attend school?

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. In circumstances where a parent does not want to bring their child to an education setting, and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker and education provider should explore the reasons for this directly with the parent and where ever possible encourage attendance to enhance the oversight of a vulnerable child whilst also progressing their educational engagement.

3 What do we do about vulnerable children if my school is closed?

If your school is closed and you have children with a named social worker who normally attends your school, then please liaise with other schools in your area to see if they are open and if the child/ren can attend their school. Once you have done so, then please liaise directly with the child's social worker to update them on the available provision for the child/ren, and jointly discuss the reasons for any non-attendance and the risk this poses to the safeguarding and welfare of the child. It's via this process that you can then decide who is best placed (school and/or social worker) to liaise with the parents about their child/ren's school attendance. Social workers are working hard to encourage parents and carers of vulnerable children to send them to school as the added oversight is recognised as important to safeguard their welfare.

4 Are social workers still making home visits?

Like your school staff, social workers are also key workers. Some have moved their working base from their office to their home (following Government and Council instructions) in order to reduce contacts with other people and help to keep all of the county's young people safe. They are using telephone calls, video calls, conference meetings, working with statutory agencies including health and police and also making home visits to ensure that young people are safe. They are dealing with new child abuse investigations on a daily basis as they are referred to social care.

5 What should I do if a vulnerable young person does not attend my school?

Schools/education providers and social workers should be agreeing with families whether children in need should be attending education provision – and the education provider should then follow up on any pupil that they were expecting to attend, who does not.

To support the above, education settings should take the opportunity when communicating with parents and carers to confirm emergency contact numbers are correct, and to ask for any additional emergency contact numbers where they are available.

In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at school, or discontinues, the education setting should notify their social worker.

6 Am I expected to make regular phone calls to the parents of vulnerable children if they do not attend my school?

By working with the child's social worker, you can both determine who is best placed to make regular calls. In most cases, this will be the child's school and therefore please keep detailed records of your telephone calls and provide the child's social worker with feedback. If you suspect that a child is at a safeguarding risk, whether at home or in your school, then you should follow usual safeguarding practices.

7 If my school is closed and I am sharing provision with another school, then who should follow up the non-attendance of a vulnerable young person?

You should work with the school with which you are sharing provision to determine who is best placed to follow this up with the family. In most cases, it is likely to be the school where the child is on roll that will have a relationship with the family and will be best placed to follow up with parents and carers rather than the school where the provision is being shared. The original school will most probably best know the child and their family and understand their response to this crisis and what will be most helpful to ensure vulnerability is mitigated wherever possible. However, headteachers of shared provision should decide this between them and keep sharing information between the schools and with the social worker(s).

Many thanks for your ongoing support.

Yours sincerely

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