



**Wandsworth Council
Childrens Services Dept
Wandsworth High St
SW18 2PU**

20th March 2020

Dear Partners,

COVID-19: Arrangements for Children's Social Care

I am writing to set out how Children's Services intends to maintain its core statutory functions, whilst following Government guidance and joining the national response to COVID-19. We hope to continue our close working relationship with partners, in what are challenging times for us all.

I know you will all appreciate that we are working in a rapidly evolving situation, so the arrangements set out below may change in the coming weeks and months.

Unless unwell, our staff continue to work. Whilst they will be largely based at home, they will continue to fulfil their statutory functions as far as is safe and possible. We intend to maintain continuity for the families we work with and have communicated with them to explain how our meetings, visits and support will be delivered at this time. We recognise that many vulnerable families will find self-isolation emotionally and practically challenging, and we are working on contingency plans to support them in a variety of different scenarios.

New referrals

Referrals should continue to be made to the MASH using the Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF). The MASH capacity will be significantly reduced so referrals will be prioritised according to immediate and acute risk. MASH can continue to be contacted on 020 8871 6622. The Out Of Hours service will remain contactable on 020 8871 6000.

Child Protection Conferences

At present, we intend to continue with all planned Child Protection Conferences, however these will take place 'virtually' using Microsoft Teams software or conference call. We ask that you ensure your staff are aware of this, and that

they continue to provide written reports to Children's Planning and Review as usual, via child.protection@wandsworth.cjsm.net.

Where a virtual conference is not possible, Review Child Protection Conferences may take place as a paper-based process; all reports will be considered by the Chair, and a detailed discussion will take place between the Child Protection Coordinator, Team Manager and Social Worker. You should anticipate that Social Workers and Child Protection Coordinators will maintain contact with you regarding the arrangements.

Statutory visits to children and their families

We are reviewing risk assessments and plans for all of the children and families we work with, so that we are in a position to prioritise those where it is essential to maintain frequent contact. Home or school visits will only be carried out if critical to a child's welfare, but we will remain in weekly remote contact with families and will endeavour to see and speak to children alone where possible.

We would very much value partners' involvement in our safety plans for children, so that families continue to receive contact and support from the wider multiagency group.

Core Group meetings

Core group meetings are a critical part of our ongoing risk assessment and they enable support planning for families; this is particularly relevant at the present time. Core group meetings will continue virtually where at all possible, using Microsoft Teams, conference call, or other software. Social Workers will be responsible for liaising with Core Group members about arrangements to meet remotely.

Children Looked After

Unless critical, we will not be visiting children in placement in order to reduce the risks to any children in the home, foster carers and residential care staff. Social Workers and IROs will be maintaining contact with young people and their carers by telephone, WhatsApp and Skype.

Contact between children and their families is being risk assessed on a case by case basis, and where face to face contact is not safe or possible, WhatsApp and Skype arrangements will be made.

Statutory reviews for Children who are Looked After will continue as planned but remotely. You can expect that where needed, the Social Worker or Independent Reviewing Officer will contact you for written or verbal information.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Referrals should continue and be made via telephone and email. Consultations and advice will continue to be given via telephone and email. Liaison will take place with partner agencies and other organisations via telephone and email as needed.

The LADO can be contacted on:

Telephone: 020 8871 7440 (the landline is diverted to mobile) and

Email: chantel.langenhoven@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk

Allegations against Staff and Volunteers Meetings will continue to take place via Conference Call. This method is already embedded in practice and no difficulties are foreseen unless partner agencies and other organisations are not available. Please make us aware of this on an individual case basis.

Safeguarding advice and support to schools

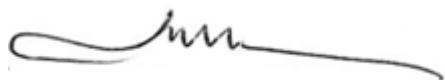
Stella Macaulay is the Safeguarding in Education Advisor (SiEA), and she will continue to provide safeguarding advice and support to schools as usual via telephone and email. Where necessary and while schools are open, visits to schools may be considered on a case by case basis but subject to risk assessment. The SiEA will be contactable via email and phone as normal during the school term.

Email: Stella.Macaulay@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk

Mobile: 07775 417 475

I wish to thank you for your continued support and understanding in what are challenging times for us all. I know that as partners, we will continue to work together to support Wandsworth's most vulnerable children, young people and families.

Best Wishes



Ana Popovici
Childrens Services Director