



Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Briefing – April 2020

Dear all

As the current situation regarding COVID-19 continues and we are all working very differently to deliver our safeguarding duties and responsibilities across Darlington. Safeguarding continues to be everyone's responsibility and our obligation is more important in the current situation where vulnerable children, young people and adults may be more isolated and separated from support and services than ever before.

There is a need for all organisations to work together to assist with any anticipated reduction in capacity of our front-line services. Individuals, families and communities are all experiencing unprecedented levels of anxiety, stress and isolation which could lead to increased tensions within the home, care setting or community. The key message being that safeguarding duties continue to apply and as far as possible it is business as usual.

We will continue to implement processes outlined in the previous bulletin dated March 2020 and you will find details below of further updates on the interim safeguarding arrangements we have put in place.

Darlington Borough Council – Child and Adult social care update

- Compiled a list of all children and adults in receipt of services and includes information from health, police and education. The children and adults have been risk rated from high to low risk to enable resources to be mobilised according to risk. The children's database has been shared with all partners under the DSP Information Sharing Protocol.
- For those children who have an allocated social worker, there is a continuing focus on ensuring those children attend school to ensure they don't remain in risk situations. All schools in Darlington have remained open, including over the Easter holiday period. We continue to be grateful for their ongoing commitment.
- Multi-agency meetings are in place weekly, for those children at heightened risk, i.e. parents/carers refusing to be visited or not sending their children to school, arrangements are being made to ensure they are seen weekly and who is best placed to do this.
- Operating procedures are being finalised to support this work, which will include an escalation protocol.
- Children's Social Care continue to see a slight decrease in referrals progressed at the front door, which is being reflected regionally and

nationally. The new front door arrangements are in now place with oversight of the care planning pathways.

- Agile working practices have been implemented. Where it is essential for face to face contact with families, social distancing is observed and a risk assessment undertaken, Public Health England Guidance is being followed where PPE is not available. Contacts with children and families are being undertaken using Skype, WhatsApp or telephone wherever possible or appropriate.
- Strategy Meetings, Initial Child Protection Conferences, Review Child Protection Conferences, Core Groups and Looked After Reviews for children are being undertaken using Microsoft teams.
- Levels of Safeguarding referrals into Adult social care are low which is being reflected nationally. Measures have been taken to strengthen reporting arrangements from care homes following the decline. Daily calls with homes are taking place to ensure any safeguarding issues are addressed.
- Strategy Meetings for Adult Safeguarding are continuing by Microsoft Teams or telephone conferencing.
- Adult Social Care are continuing to follow the principles of Making Safeguarding Personal to ensure people are involved wherever possible. This is being undertaken by telephone or other forms of communication i.e. face time, zoom where feasible with the individual or their advocate/family representative.

Health organisations update:

- Contributing to the weekly Critical Safeguarding Partnership Group meetings to ensure those children rated at highest risk are safeguarded.
- Health partners are not experiencing an increase in safeguarding issues, however are anxious there is a lot less contact between GP's and families and they have been asked to heighten vigilance.
- Health are highlighting concerns with children presenting very late, especially those with complex health needs, parents are not following usual pathways, resulting in a delay in presentation with unwell or injured children. It is assumed this is parents/carers reluctance and anxiety in accessing health care due to COVID-19, which may lead to safeguarding concerns. National Guidance has been developed, the RCPCH has produced a number of [guidance documents](#) on COVID19 and there is a [poster](#) for parents on warning signs for illness in children as well as other resources for families to access.
- Health providers are working hard to ensure staff in all areas have access to PPE which will be used in all face to face contacts with patients where it is not possible to safely maintain a 2m distance. Where face to face is not required, contact is being made by telephone or video where possible.
- TEWV are continuing to manage bed capacity and have suspended all visiting to inpatients. Skype-enabled tablets have been delivered to facilitate 'virtual' visiting. Mental health support for those in crisis continues to be made available and community mental health continue to prioritise contact with patients

assessed as highest risk. The service are working hard to ensure that all patients receive regular contact over the coming weeks to provide support and help avoid social isolation.

- HDFT 0-19 service continue to prioritise safeguarding across its service. The 0-19 service is undertaking new birth visits, the service is struggling with PPE so staff are risk assessing when home visiting. There have been issues following discharge from hospital for new births with low birth-weight, scales have been left in the family home and video calls are being held on a weekly basis. Child Protection meetings are being held using Microsoft Teams.
- CDDFT urgent Looked After Children (LAC) Initial Health Assessments continue to be delivered and are being undertaken by telephone consultation with carers/young people rather than face to face.
- It has been highlighted there have been some issues regarding consent. It has since been agreed under the circumstances that verbal consent can be obtained.

Durham Constabulary update:

- Business as usual and where there is a need for social distancing, measures have been put in place such as virtual strategy and partnership meetings and the use of PPE to allow child protection, support and investigation processes to continue.
- Working with partners to ensure children are still visible to authorities where they may have specific needs and vulnerabilities.
- Increased ASB patrols and advising children and parents around their legal obligations to comply with the current emergency lockdown.
- Monitoring domestic violence and trying to increase opportunities for men and women to report abuse.
- Online preventative work continues in order to protect children and the vulnerable from online fraud and exploitation.
- Continue to work with partners/carers to prevent children going missing home and care and safely recovering them when required.

Business Continuity

As a partnership, we have increased our meetings, to have a strong collective oversight of all safeguarding arrangements, which ensure fulfilment of our statutory obligations.

Our website continues to be revised and updated and have provided an information page for Partners on COVID-19, see [DSP website](#). This page provides the latest updates and changes to services provided by partner agencies as well as signposting to National legislation and guidance.

All face to face multi-agency safeguarding training has been cancelled for the foreseeable time, this is being reviewed on a monthly basis. In the interim, there are e-learning packages available for basic / refresher training in Child and adult

safeguarding which can be shared with colleagues within your organisation, details available on the [DSP website](#).

All face to face partnership meetings (sub-groups, task and finish groups etc.) have been cancelled, we are continuing to conduct as much of the business as is feasible via e-mail and conference facility where possible.

The Partnership business unit continue to work from home and are contactable on the usual telephone numbers and e-mail addresses (as shown below).

It is assuring how we are all working closely together to get through this and adapting our ways of working to ensure the most vulnerable are being supported and safeguarded.

Once again we would like to thank you all for the commitment, support and work you are providing to support our children, vulnerable adults and their families during this very challenging time.

Suzanne Joyner Director of Children and Adults Services, Darlington Borough Council

Adrian Green, Chief Superintendent, Durham Constabulary

David Gallagher, Chief Officer, Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group

Ann Baxter, Independent Chair/Scrutineer

Statutory Safeguarding Partners

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