

COVID -19 Update – Education Planning and Birmingham Children with an allocated social worker

Please note: more government advice is expected shortly for social care colleagues.

Updated advice from the DfE on vulnerable children was released on the 23rd of March 2020 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>

Children/Young People with a Child in Need Plan or Child Protection Plan:

Parents of children who are open to Birmingham Children’s Trust because they have a child in need plan or a child protection plan, make the decision regarding whether their child attends school during the Covid 19 outbreak. Birmingham Children’s Trust staff will encourage parents to keep their children in school, however, social workers do not have any legal powers to enforce this.

Since the emergence of Covid 19, social workers in the Trust have been working hard to assess the circumstances of all children open to the Trust. Risk assessments in respect of visiting children and keeping in touch with families have been undertaken and the needs of individual children will continue to be reviewed by their social workers.

The Trust has introduced a number of methods of maintaining visits and important meetings for children such as strategy meetings, child protection case conferences and core groups. Schools staff who contribute to children’s plans will be invited to a number of remote meetings as an alternative to usual meetings.

Children in Care:

For children in care, the decision to continue schooling during this period will be a joint decision between the carer and the social worker, the Independent Reviewing Officer and the school.

This decision will be reached (as for all other children) through discussion of the two key government principles which are:

1. If it is at all possible for child/ young person to be looked after at home, then they should be. The fact that are no longer attending school will be recorded on the PEP – (details to follow).
There will be a plan of coordination between the school, Virtual School and the social worker around maintained contact and communication during this period. Regular progress reports will be shared.
2. However, if the child needs specialist support, is vulnerable in their home and school is a protective factor in the care placement, or has a parent/carer who is a critical worker then the social worker or parent/carer will communicate this to the educational provision so that continued educational provision can be made available for them. These educational sessions must be recorded within the part time timetable section of the PEP (details to follow)

Specific Updates for Children in Care

For Children/Young People continuing to attend an education provision the following factors need to be considered and reviewed regularly in line with the child/young person's levels of resilience, social and emotional needs:

- Education Provision: Is the education provision on offer at the usual setting? Is there a possibility this will shut? If the setting is likely to change consideration must be given to the child/young person's resilience and ability to manage change
- Stability of staffing: Is the child/young person dependent on relationships with key staff/staffing ratios? Are they likely to be impacted by changes in staffing/rotation of staff?
- Dependence on structure and routine: Is the child/young person likely to be impacted by changes in structure/lack of routine/variations in pupil groups (unfamiliar pupils or differing ages within the group)?
- Stigmatisation: will the child/young person feel singled out as different as they are expected to be in an education provision when peers are not? Will this impact on them being identified as children in care?
- Safeguarding: How will information be shared/cascaded to staff not familiar with the child/young person in respect of key information? Will the DT and DSL remain available?
- Care Placement: How critical is the education provision to the stability of the young person's current care placement? Where it is critical the updated DfE guidance states education must be provided and if the school is unable to stay open due to staffing levels the LA must ensure an alternative school place is made available.