

Covid-19 Briefing for Designated Safeguarding Lead's (DSL's) in Telford & Wrekin

Re-issued: 08/01/2021 (to benchmark with COVID-19 addendum to Child Protection & Safeguarding policy)

This is a guide to help DSL's consider the best way to support vulnerable families during full or partial school closures in term times.

During term time, the designated safeguarding lead and/or a deputy should always be available (during school or college hours) for staff in the school or college to discuss any safeguarding concerns.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020

An assessment of your staff resources and the needs of your families will be required before being able to commit and an understanding, this may need to be reassessed regularly due to the changing situation.

Aims

- Ensure all pupils have regular contact from staff
- Ensure confidentiality and safety of records
- All vulnerable families have additional contact and support with any concerns reported and recorded.

Stage 1 Preparation for closure

Review the academy/school vulnerable children's list to identify:

- Children on a Child Protection Plan
- Children on Child in Need Plan
- Children who are on an Early Help Plan
- Looked after children, including those in family or private fostering placements
- Children for whom an extended period of time at home will present an additional risk to the child
- Children who are acting as Young Carer.

Additional Vulnerable groups added by the Government as of January 2021

- children on a special guardianship order
- those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study)
- care leavers
- others at the provider and local authority's discretion including pupils and students who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

Review each case and decide if they are a vulnerable child and will continue to attend school or if they will not be deemed a vulnerable child and therefore the school will be closed to them.

For each category, decide based on the level of need/concern, how often a home telephone call should be undertaken whilst the academy/school is partially closed, during term times or

where directed during school holidays. This is for children who are not eligible to attend during school closures, for those children who are eligible to attend but cannot, for example, due to self-isolation or for children whose parents who chose not to send them to school. This may vary from 3-5 days, but contact should no longer than every 5 days. For some children, it may be necessary to contact them every day.

Record this risk assessment for your decision on the child's safeguarding file.

Divide the children between the DSL team available and ensure that each member of the team knows which children they are allocated to, to undertake these telephone calls, during school closure in term times and/or for children who cannot/do not attend or those who the school is closed to.

Record this decision on the child's safeguarding file.

Contact details of parents, social worker and any multi-agency professional working with the child must be recorded on the child's file.

Establish where the children will be living in the event of a partial closure or full closure and discuss with parents the need to respond to calls.

Liaise with specialist health teams for any child with a chronic long term health/respiratory needs e.g. Brittle Asthma, Cardiac issues, Cystic Fibrosis and inform them of an academy/school closure.

If possible speak to the vulnerable children about the partial or full closure period to gain their wishes and feelings regarding support needed. If possible, when informing **all** children of the partial or full closure please ask them to speak to a member of staff if they are concerned for their safety or well-being in any way during this period. Reiterate the same messages you would give to children about their safety during a school holiday, for example, places of safety, trusted adults and helpline numbers. These messages and contact numbers should be on the academy/school website for children to locate should they require them.

Remind school staff to only use approved contacts methods – no social media groups etc.

All staff should be provided with professional contact details for DSL's to enable them to discuss any concerns they may have about children during closures in term times.

The DSL must ensure that remote access (working from home or another school) to the electronic recording system is possible and that a suitable computer device is available for each member of the DSL team.

For those academies/schools who do not have an electronic recording system, records should still be held electronically where possible, for instance, via the cloud.

All electronic recording should only be made on academy/school devices.

In all other circumstances, paper copies of minimum contact details for parents and children (name, address, telephone numbers) may be held by each DSL securely at home or at another school (at home this does not need to be locked away, but should be out of sight of others).

A record of paper files taken off the academy/school premises should be made, including the reason as to why.

If a DSL becomes ill while in the possession of these files another DSL should arrange to collect these files, following guidance from Public Health England.

A record of who is holding paper records off the premises must be maintained at the academy/school or electronically at all times.

When taking documents school to school or school to home please ensure they are transported in a receptacle that can be secured, e.g. has a zip or some other fastening.

When transporting keep documents in boot of your car for the shortest period if you need to take them home remove from the boot and store securely.

If you are accessing data online e.g. CPOMS you must ensure access is removed as soon as this pandemic is over and schools return. You must only access the data of the children you are looking after.

Do not allow family and/or friends to see any of the information you are working on.

If you have to access data of any child you must keep any information you see or hear confidential and abide by your own schools GDPR rules.

Please note all relevant school policies still apply.

Advice sought from Telford & Wrekin Council Information Governance regarding this.

For any changes to DSL's and their availability during partial or full closures please email educationsafeguarding@telford.gov.uk with details of who will be acting as the DSL in the absence of others.

Stage 2 Process during closure

Inform the allocated social worker for all children on a child protection or child in need plan and those children who are looked after in the event of full closure, if the child will be at home for self-isolation or illness in the event of partial closure or if their parent chooses not to send to them to school..

Inform the lead professional for children on an Early Help plan the child will be at home for the period of the closure.

Undertake a contact telephone call as per the agreed risk assessment for the necessary children to the parent and always where possible the children, making a record of the following points on the child's safeguarding file:

- By speaking to the parents – any concerns or worries raised
- By speaking to the child – any concerns or worries raised (not to be missed out)
- Summarising the situation as reported
- Noting any actions that need to be undertaken.

Where concerns for a child at home escalate a referral should be made to Family Connect (and/or the local authority the child lives), if at immediate risk to the Police. Where a child is open to social worker, report concerns to the allocated social worker or a member of their team.

If not able to make contact with the parent/carer– keep trying for the rest of the school day. Follow usual Education Welfare procedures for children not in school, alert the DSL if you are a deputy DSL. If you have concerns of significant harm report to Family Connect or if you feel the child is at risk of immediate harm report to police.

Where a school receives Operation Encompass notification emails the inbox should be checked on a daily basis and appropriate actions taken.

In the event of full closure or partial closure affecting the DSL team must meet face-to-face or virtually each week, via a suitable method, such as Microsoft Teams or Skype, to discuss the status of each child they are working with.

DSL's should attend any Child Protection conferences, core group meetings, Child in Need meetings, Child in Care meetings and Early Help Assessment meetings, unless advised otherwise. A report must always be provided if not attending.

Inform parents of children who are not attending of the procedures for accessing food for children who are eligible for free school meals following Telford & Wrekin Council procedures.

DSL's should offer appropriate support to a child affected by Covid-19 e.g. family death.

The DSL must be available to provide supervision to deputy DSL's during partial closure periods in term times. In the event of illness of a DSL, other DSL's should take on their responsibilities. If there is large scale illness of DSL's a member of SLT must coordinate other appropriate school staff to carry out the task of contacting identified families to help check on the safety and welfare of children.

Stage 3 Re-opening of the academy/school to all children

Update relevant professionals of the academy/school reopening.

Update relevant school staff of any significant incident that occurred for a child whilst the academy/school was fully or partially closed.

Where applicable, all paper records must be returned to the academy/school on the first day of opening and a record made of return.

A face-to-face review with all pupils who have had phone monitoring over the closure period should be conducted and this should be recorded.

Offer appropriate support to a child affected by Covid-19 e.g. family death.