

From Strength to Strength

Covid 19 Bulletin

8th January 2021

Dear all,

Happy New Year!

I hope that everyone is well, staying safe and that as many of you as possible had an enjoyable time over the festive period. I am writing to acknowledge that this third lockdown is likely to be a very difficult time for many of us and for the children that you are caring for. I am sure that you are all aware that on Monday 4th January 2021, the Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced a new national lockdown for England as a result of the rising number of Coronavirus cases.

Following this announcement, we made the decision that all Looked After children should be contacted virtually on a weekly basis; this is likely to be the child's Social Worker, but they may ask that your Supervising Social Worker helps with some of these calls. The purpose of the regular calls is to find out how you and the children that you are caring for are feeling about the new coronavirus restrictions, what worries you might have, how the lockdown is impacting on your family and working lives and if there is anything that we can support you with. We will need to make sure that we have your up to date contact details, any working arrangements and whether you prefer using certain Apps rather than telephone calls. Some children in our care may also need to be seen by their Social Workers directly, this will always be done following Government guidance and will be risk assessed in advance. (see below)

Schools, Colleges and Universities

- Colleges, primary (reception onwards) and secondary schools will remain open for vulnerable children.
- Early Years settings (including nurseries and childminders) remain open for all children who use them
- Vulnerable children can continue to use registered childcare, childminders and other childcare activities (including wraparound care)
- Most university students are advised to remain where they are wherever possible, and start their term online, as facilitated by their university until at least Mid-February. A limited number of courses where personal contact is essential will be returning to onsite training in January (e.g. medicine, nursing, teacher training, social work). Students should follow the advice from their own university.

Children's Social workers will be asking you whether the children that you are caring for will be attending school, day care or other form of education. They will also ask if you need support in relation to any educational issues.

Visits to Children

As mentioned above, Looked After children may need to be seen in person if it is safe to do so. Social Workers will be undertaking risk assessments prior to any visits being undertaken and will be discussing the outcome with their Team Managers. We are aware that coronavirus (COVID-19) brings additional concern and complexity and so we are likely to agree a blend of face to face visits along with virtual visits during this period. Any face to face visits will be undertaken in line with Government and public health guidance and all relevant PPE will be used.

Contact with birth family members

Any contact arrangements that were in place prior to us moving into tier 4 will continue to take place, again these will be subject to risk assessment to ensure that contact takes place safely.

Here is the most up to date advice / guidance published by the government at the time of writing;

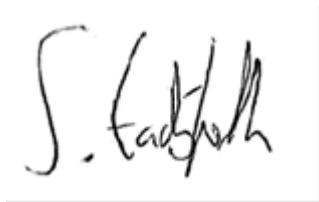
Department for Education [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for local authorities on children's social care](#) Updated on 31st December

Department for Education [Safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#) Updated 14 December 2020

Cabinet Office [National lockdown: Stay at Home](#) Coronavirus cases are rising rapidly across the country. Find out what you can and cannot do. Published 4th January 2021

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to you all for caring for our vulnerable children and responding to our regular requests to help when needed. You do a fantastic job supporting our most vulnerable children, thank you. Ty and I will keep you updated in relation to any changes to our working practices during the lockdown period. I wish you all of the best and hope that you remain safe and well.

Many thanks



Sophie Eadsforth
Group Manager, Looked After Children, Leaving Care, Children with Disabilities & Fostering Services
Nottinghamshire County Council
County Hall
Tel: 0115 804 1211
email: sophie.eadsforth@nottscce.gov.uk