

COVID-19 Children and Young People (CYP) Response Plan for education settings – Summer 2020

Schools and other educational settings and their staff form part of the wider safeguarding system for CYP. In conjunction with other agencies, they play a vital role in safeguarding CYP during the current emergency arrangements due to COVID-19. During this period, settings retain their statutory duties to safeguard CYP and must adapt their existing processes to the current situation to ensure they continue to operate effectively. As well as supporting safeguarding, regular contact with children and families will enable schools to provide important support, address any relatively minor concerns before they escalate and to maintain relationships with their pupils. This will be of value as part of re-opening arrangements as settings will be able to identify any additional interventions required to support CYP when they return.

Settings should have in place a [child protection policy](#) which sets out interim safeguarding arrangements. Settings will decide the means and frequency of contact with CYP and families and identify staff to undertake this. All staff should understand the importance and purpose of this contact as part of their role to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all pupils. More detailed guidance is provided below.

The purpose of this guidance is to provide a framework to support settings in fulfilling their safeguarding responsibilities during the closure period. The framework is based on the [Essex Effective Support](#) windscreen of need and, at each level, it defines cohorts, sets minimum expectations for settings in terms of actions and then identifies key partners and agencies with which settings could / should be linking to access support.

Level of need	Cohort	Education placement or offer	Education setting intervention	LA support / intervention and support from other agencies
UNIVERSAL	All CYP on roll at a mainstream school	All mainstream schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assess the needs of all CYP, risk assessing as appropriate (<i>see notes below and Appendix C</i>)Agree an Education offer (this will be for individual pupils and / or a whole school learning plan – <i>it may be via remote learning or education packs</i>)	Early Years Education Partner Essex Child & Family Wellbeing Service Essex Youth Service School Effectiveness Partner Voluntary agencies

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information to all CYP and parents / carers about how to keep themselves safe online and how to report concerns • Agree arrangements for regular welfare check (<i>method, frequency and record keeping – at least weekly, for all pupils, more frequently for those with higher need</i>) • Ensure there is a mechanism in place for regularly reviewing pupil risk assessments and plans, which should include a system to identify CYP who become vulnerable 	<p><i>Details of local agencies who could provide a service are available in the C&FH Directory of Services</i></p>
ADDITIONAL	CYP with additional need (for example, medical, mental health, SEN, behavioural, CWD, those working with Family Solutions or with other vulnerabilities identified by the school)	All mainstream schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree an Education offer (<i>personalised to meet any additional needs – this may be a specific plan for pupils accessing PPG, or a One Plan for pupils with SEND during the closure period - it may be via remote learning or education packs</i>) • Provide information to all CYP and parents / carers about how to keep themselves safe online and how to report concerns • Agree arrangements for Welfare check (method and frequency) 	<p>Attendance Specialist</p> <p>Early Years Education Partner</p> <p>Education Access Team</p> <p>Engagement Facilitators</p> <p>Essex Child & Family Wellbeing Service</p> <p>Essex local offer</p> <p>Essex One Planning</p>

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	<p>CYP with FSM eligibility</p> <p>CYP who have received a 'shielding letter'</p> <p>CYP with a sensory and / or physical impairment (without an EHCP)</p> <p>CYP (and / or their families) who have been victims of Hate Crime</p> <p>CYP who are privately fostered / subject to Special Guardianship Order (SGO) / recently adopted / recently returned home from Care</p> <p>CYP for whom there have been previous issues of bullying</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with C&FH • Organise a virtual TAF (Team Around the Family) meeting, where there are concerns about a CYP and a multi-agency approach is felt helpful • Request support via Essex Effective Support • Implement transition planning for starters and leavers, including school readiness with all relevant settings 	<p>Essex Team Around the Family Support</p> <p>Essex Physical and Sensory Impairment Specialist Teaching Service</p> <p>Essex Welfare Service</p> <p>Essex Youth Service</p> <p>Inclusion Partner</p> <p>Individual Pupil Resourcing Agreement (IPRA) funding</p> <p>School Effectiveness Partner</p> <p>Stop Hate UK</p> <p>Voluntary agencies</p>
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	<p>Education Access / SEND Team maintained list (Not On Roll)</p> <p>New starters (Reception or EYFS)</p> <p>Families with English as an Additional Language (EAL)</p> <p>LGBTQ</p> <p>CYP from a Traveller family</p> <p>Year 2 leavers</p> <p>Year 6 leavers</p> <p>Year 11 leavers</p>			<p><i>Details of local agencies who could provide a service are available in the C&FH Directory of Services</i></p>
INTENSIVE	<p>CYP with a mental health issue</p> <p>CYP where there are domestic abuse issues (either living</p>	<p>All mainstream schools</p> <p>PRUs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree an Education offer <i>(personalised to meet any additional needs – this may a specific plan for pupils accessing PPG, or a One Plan for pupils with SEND during the closure period - it may be via remote learning or education packs)</i> 	<p>Critical Incident Response</p> <p>Education Access Team</p> <p>Education Psychology Service</p>

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	<p>with / victim of or perpetrator)</p> <p>CYP at risk of radicalisation / PREVENT issues</p> <p>Young carers</p> <p>Young offenders</p>	<p>Alternative Provisions</p> <p>Education Access Team maintained list (NOR)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information to all CYP and parents / carers about how to keep themselves safe online and how to report concerns • Agree and review risk assessments and plans with other agencies involved (this may occur through existing meeting schedules) • Organise a virtual TAF (Team Around the Family) meeting, where there are concerns about a CYP and a multi-agency approach is felt helpful • Consult with C&FH • Request support via Essex Effective Support • Contact C&FH to discuss any potential PREVENT issues and / or discuss with the Education PREVENT Lead (<i>Jo Barclay, Safeguarding Manager for Schools and Early Years</i>) 	<p>Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service</p> <p>Essex Child & Family Wellbeing Service</p> <p>Essex Family Solutions</p> <p>Essex local offer</p> <p>Essex One Planning</p> <p>Essex Team Around the Family Support</p> <p>Essex Youth Service</p> <p>Essex Youth Offending Service</p> <p>Inclusion Partner</p> <p>Individual Pupil Resourcing Agreement (IPRA) funding</p> <p>School Effectiveness Partner</p>
SPECIALIST	<p>Child in Care (CIC)</p> <p>CYP subject to a Child Protection (CP) Plan</p>	<p>All mainstream schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For vulnerable CYP (as defined by the government) and CYP with an EHCP, there is a risk assessment to inform the decision about whether they will take up the offer of a place in school, 	<p>Critical Incident Response</p> <p>Education Psychology Service</p>

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	CYP subject to a Child in Need (CIN) Plan	Special schools	or whether they would be safer at home (<i>see notes below point 2 and Appendix A and B</i>)	Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service
	CYP with a mental health issue	Special residential schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree a personalised Education offer that sets out the elements of the EHCP that can reasonably be delivered during the closure period (<i>this must be agreed in partnership with parents / carers - it may be via remote learning or education packs</i>) 	Essex Child & Family Wellbeing Service (for CiC)
	CYP with an EHCP	Adolescent Psychiatric Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information to all CYP and parents / carers about how to keep themselves safe online and how to report concerns 	Essex Family Solutions
		PRUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree and review risk assessments and plans with other agencies involved (this may occur through existing meeting schedules) 	Essex local offer
		Education Access Team maintained list (NOR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend virtual CIN meetings (where applicable) and provide reports as required Attend virtual Statutory Reviews for CiC (where applicable) and provide reports as required Link with Virtual School Headteacher Attend virtual CP Case Conferences, Core Group meetings and CIN meetings (where applicable) and provide reports as required 	Essex Team Around the Family Support Essex Youth Service Essex Youth Offending Service Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Team (MARAT) School Effectiveness Partner Virtual School

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This guidance is based on and compliant with key documents from the government as part of its response to COVID-19:

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance on vulnerable children and young people](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): school closures](#)

1. Risk assessments, welfare checks and plans to safeguard all CYP

The needs of all pupils should be assessed ('RAG rated') according to need and potential vulnerability. Risk assessments should be undertaken and appropriate plans to support and track pupils put in place. Pupils should be allocated to a member of staff, who will be responsible for contact (welfare checks), according to the individual need of the CYP. There should also be a named 'back-up' member of staff, to cover absence in the event of sickness or leave of the lead member of staff.

Settings must use their knowledge of CYP and families to determine the method and frequency of contact with parents / carers and what constitutes an adequate welfare check. Many parents / carers may not answer a call from an 'anonymous' number or may just be unwilling to engage with the setting. Email contact can be useful, as some parents / carers may be more willing to use this as a means of communication and it provides an audit trail. It is obviously more robust if a member of staff has also had regular online contact with a pupil as part of their education plan. In terms of frequency, at least weekly is advisable and parents / carers should understand this is part of school arrangements to safeguard and support all CYP (*Appendix D and E*)

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Risk assessments and plans will be fluid, with CYP potentially moving between categories. For example, many CYP for whom there have been no previous concerns may be at higher risk without the protective factor of school attendance, so it is important there are systems in place for identifying those who become vulnerable (hence the at least weekly welfare check). Equally, some CYP will have vulnerabilities and be deemed therefore at higher risk although, once there are support mechanisms in place, they may be categorised as being at a lower level of risk. (This support may include a TAF multi-agency support plan, specialist service provision in relation to physical, emotional or mental health, extended family or community-based support). Settings will be reassured if they have arrangements for education in place which enables them to have regular contact with pupils (although this may not be possible in settings not providing online education activities). Clearly, where a CYP is engaging online with a teacher, it is useful to record this as 'contact' in the event parents / carers do not respond to a welfare check. However, contact with a CYP should not be a replacement for a welfare check. COVID-19 will start to impact on families in many ways potentially and it is important there is a mechanism for any concerns, stresses or bereavements to be identified so the school can respond at an early stage and engage other agencies as required. It is important that assessments and plans are regularly reviewed to ensure they meet current circumstances and need.

Where other agencies are already involved, risk assessments and planning should be a joint activity so the approach and interventions can be co-ordinated. There may be CYP where other agencies are involved, but they do not have a social worker. Settings have the flexibility to offer these a place on site (if they are deemed vulnerable), but this decision should be underpinned by a risk assessment which is contributed to by other professionals involved.

Where other agencies are not already involved, settings may want to consider how they could build capacity to support some CYP and families, using the [Directory of Services](#) or linking with partners (the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service or Youth Service, for example) to adopt a 'Team Around the Family' (TAF) approach to support. Such discussions and subsequent reviews could be held as 'virtual' meetings, so there is a more formal process in place, where this may be required. Further information on the TAF / Early Help process is available [here](#). Settings may also wish to seek advice from the Team Around the Family Support Officer ([TAFSO](#)) and can make contact by emailing: TAFSO@essex.gov.uk

In guidance issued to Social Care the government refer to decisions being made in the spirit of the following principles:

- child-centred - promoting children's best interests
- risk-based - prioritising support and resources for children at greatest risk
- family focussed - harnessing the strengths in families and their communities
- evidence informed - ensuring decisions are proportionate and justified
- collaborative - working in partnership with parents / carers and other professionals

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- transparent - providing clarity and maintaining professional curiosity about a child's wellbeing

It is advisable that settings apply the same principles to their own risk assessments, planning and response.

A team of social workers to support settings with undertaking risk assessments has been identified and they will be making contact over the closure period. This is intended to be a supportive measure to build capacity and expertise around assessing risk and to support Designated Leads and Deputy Designated Leads who are managing cases with high levels of risk involved. This team will be phoning schools to discuss CYP who have a social worker ('vulnerable' children). However, settings may also wish to discuss risk assessments for other vulnerable children (those below the threshold for an intervention from Social Care). The team is also happy to support with this and can be contacted via Lynne Hooper at: lynne.hooper@essex.gov.uk.

The Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service (ECFWS) is also available to support settings with vulnerable CYP. They will also be linking with schools over this period to discuss particular CYP and will be able to form part of the safeguarding arrangements for pupils.

2. Risk assessments to inform decision on whether vulnerable CYP or those with an EHCP should be in school

The governmental guidance on supporting vulnerable children states that local authorities, nurseries, schools, special schools, colleges and other training providers should undertake a risk assessment to establish the individual needs of each CYP with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan. This assessment should incorporate the views of the CYP and their parents / carers and will inform the decision about whether they should continue in school or college, or whether their needs can be safely met at home. The guidance also states that leaders of educational settings and designated safeguarding leads will know who their most vulnerable children are. Settings therefore have the flexibility to offer places to children who are "on the edge" of receiving support from Social Care. As with other vulnerable children, risk assessments should drive the decision making on this, undertaken in conjunction with any other agencies involved.

In partnership with special school Headteachers, the local authority developed two pro forma risk assessments to support schools in making these considerations. The first (*Appendix A*) is more detailed and likelier to apply where the CYP has more complex needs such as underlying health conditions. The second (*Appendix B*) is still comprehensive but would be more applicable where other needs are the challenge. Where the CYP

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has a social worker or if there is involvement from a health professional, they should be consulted. Governmental guidance on SEND risk assessment is available [here](#)

3. What to do if parents / carers do not respond to contact / welfare checks

Settings should have informed all parents / carers of safeguarding arrangements, so they are expecting to be contacted and understand the reason for this. Whichever method is used to 'check in' with parents / carers, there should plans in place for action to be taken where the family does not engage or respond.

Where parents / carers do not respond to a welfare check, all 'reasonable' attempts must be made by the setting to establish contact. If contact by phone or email has not been successful, the setting may feel a home visit is required. Any such visit must be risk assessed in advance and the member(s) of staff undertaking the visit should be involved in that process. Where a home visit is undertaken, staff members should not enter the home. Staff could phone the parent from outside the home to request sight of the CYP and to have a discussion with the parent, keeping a safe distance at all times.

Where attempts at contact with parents / carers and / or the pupil have not been successful, settings should speak with any other agencies already involved with the family. If another professional is having contact with the family, this can be recorded as part of the welfare check process and should be written into the risk assessment and plan if agreed this is an adequate safeguarding measure. It is not the sole responsibility of the setting to undertake welfare checks, other agencies may be involved. However, the setting should be linking with other agencies as appropriate to ensure their role is reflected in the overall risk assessment and plan held by the setting.

Where all the above has been exhausted and the setting has attempted contact with the emergency contact numbers held for a child, there may be genuine concern that a child is at risk and the setting should respond accordingly, linking with other agencies as appropriate.

4. What to do if a vulnerable CYP does not attend

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There is an expectation that vulnerable CYP will continue to attend educational provision, where it is appropriate for them to do so. Decisions on attendance will be based on discussions between settings, parents / carers, Social Care and other relevant professionals. Settings should make judgments with these partners about whether it is beneficial and appropriate for CYP to continue to attend on site. In doing so they will need to consider the balance of risk, including health vulnerabilities, family circumstances and the child or young person's assessed special educational needs.

In circumstances where a parent does not want to bring their child to an educational setting, and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker (where appropriate) and educational setting should explore the reasons for this, directly with the parent. Where parents are concerned about the risk of the child contracting the virus, the setting or social worker should talk through these concerns with the parent following the [advice set out by Public Health England](#).

Local authorities and education settings do not need to complete the usual day-to-day processes to follow up on non-attendance. Settings and social workers should be agreeing with families whether vulnerable CYP should be attending education provision and the setting should then follow up on any pupil that they were expecting to attend, who does not.

Settings should also follow up with any parent / carer who has arranged care for their child(ren) and the child(ren) subsequently do not attend. To support the above, settings should take the opportunity when communicating with parents and carers to confirm emergency contact numbers are correct and to ask for any additional emergency contact numbers where they are available.

Where a vulnerable CYP does not take up their place at the educational provision or discontinues attending, the setting must notify their social worker.

5. What to do if there are concerns about a CYP

The existing principles of safeguarding and child protection still apply, although they will need to be adapted to ensure they operate effectively during this closure period. Staff having contact with children and families during these emergency arrangements (either with CYP attending on

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site or while they are at home) should continue to raise concerns in the usual way. As always, all staff must be aware how to refer a concern about a CYP and this should include how to record it and who to report it to. The Designated Lead or Deputy Designated Lead (DL or DDL) will then decide how to respond to the concern raised and progress it, liaising with other agencies as appropriate.

[Essex Effective Support](#) brings together in one place the Essex Directory of Services, guidance and tools to support practitioners in their work with children and families across Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the Windscreen of Need.

Where a child is at **immediate risk of significant harm**, the DL or DDL should call the Children and Families Hub on **0345 603 7627** and ask for the 'Priority Line' (or call the Police on 999). There is an 'out of hours' service (Mon-Thurs 5pm to 9am, Friday and Bank Holidays 4:30pm to 9am): Emergency.DutyTeamOutOfHours@essex.gov.uk or 0345 606 1212. **For non-urgent matters**, [Essex Effective Support](#) provides access to an online Request for Support portal.

The Children and Families Hub also offers a consultation line for professionals providing advice and guidance. This can be accessed by calling 0345 603 7627 and asking for the 'Consultation Line'.

6. CYP with a 'shielding letter'

Shielding is a measure to protect medically vulnerable people (including CYP) by minimising their interaction with others. This means that those who are medically vulnerable should not leave their homes, and within their homes should minimise all non-essential contact with other members of the household. This is to protect those who are at very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) by coming into contact with the virus. Any CYP who has received a shielding letter should not be coming on site and plans for these children should be discussed with other relevant agencies.

7. Reviewing cases

As stated above, it is important for risk assessments to plans to be regularly reviewed and updated to meet need. Where there is an existing mechanism for doing this (for example 'vulnerable pupil panels'), arrangements could be made to hold these virtually. Where there is not, settings

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should consider how cases are reviewed to ensure risk assessments and plans are fit for purpose. Discussions at reviews should be recorded and should include the rationale for decision making.

8. Child Protection (CP) Records

It is essential that robust recording of all safeguarding and child protection matters continues during the closure period and settings must have arrangements in place for this to be done effectively. All staff must be clear what and how to record and how to share this with the DL or DDL. All contacts with children and families (including attempted) should be recorded in the usual way. Settings should consider how any new information will be recorded and safely stored while access to the school site is not possible or practical. There are model templates on [Essex School Infolink / model templates](#) for reporting and recording, should settings wish to use them.

It is important the DL or DDL is able to access CP files. This may be to provide information to another agency when required or to inform decision making about how to progress with a particular case, or to review it. Where there is no access to an online system, or where the setting uses a paper file system, it is advisable to have a summary of concerns for each case (existing file chronologies may meet this need - these could be scanned or photocopies could be taken).

9. Communication with parents / carers / CYP

Settings should communicate to parents / carers what contact will be made (when, how and why), so there is a robust framework for welfare check procedures, understood by all CYP, staff and parents / carers. Parents / carers should be clear this forms part of the setting's safeguarding arrangements during closure and be urged to support the setting by engaging in these arrangements. Settings should, as far as possible, confirm they have accurate contact details of all parents / carers (email and phone), including back-up emergency contact details (as is already required). Where possible, staff should be provided with equipment for communication with parents / carers. Where this is not possible, there should be written advice for staff on how to use their own equipment safely. This should be based on the existing Code of Conduct but may need to contain additional information about how to withhold phone numbers, for example. If staff wish to come on site to undertake welfare checks instead of doing this from home, consideration should be given to whether this can be done in a safe way and the usual social distancing rules would apply.

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Where considered appropriate (and for a specific reason), settings may require certain staff to communicate directly with some (older) CYP. To ensure this is done safely, there should be written processes in place to communicate to parents / carers, pupils and staff how this will operate. It is advisable to provide staff with written advice to support this and settings may wish to have a separate agreement signed by staff to cover this temporary arrangement. As an extension of existing safeguarding arrangements, settings should ensure that all pupils understand how to contact a 'trusted adult' if they want to raise a concern or request support. There should be clear communication to pupils about how this can be done (who, how) and arrangements in place to ensure this is done safely and that all contacts are responded to and actioned as appropriate.

Settings should ensure all parents / carers have contact details for key members of staff and, critically, that they are informed how to report a concern or seek support (including contact details for the C&FH). Key staff should have accurate 'automatic replies' set up on email systems, with clear information about how to access appropriate staff for safeguarding matters (bear in mind, this will need to reflect current staffing arrangements so there is a mechanism to cover potential staff sickness)

As under usual working circumstances, staff may encounter difficult and / or distressing discussions with parents, although perhaps more so during the current emergency situation. Headteachers should ensure there are adequate supervision arrangements in place to support staff wellbeing and to make all staff aware how to access support if they need to after contact with a parent (as set out in the 'Covid Working from Home guidance previously circulated)

10. Safeguarding / Child Protection Policy for closure period

Settings should share an 'interim' [Safeguarding / Child Protection Policy](#) with parents / carers and staff – it would also be useful to publish it on the school website. Any school using the model policy should adapt it to ensure it accurately reflects their own processes and arrangements.

11. Starters and leavers

Settings will want to think about transition plans for starters and leavers and how to adapt them during this period. Settings will recognise that some CYP will have struggled with transition, even during usual circumstances, so should think about appropriate levels of support for these

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groups. For Year 11 pupils, settings may want to think about maintaining contact, particularly those who are known to be vulnerable and those who may need support with plans for Year 12.

Appendix A – complex needs



COVID19 RA
Template for Schools

Appendix B – additional needs



COVID 19 RA
Template for Schools

Appendix C - safeguarding risk assessment



RA3 - safeguarding
assessment.docx

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Appendix D – letter to parents / carers (for pupils without a Care, CP or CIN Plan)

Dear Parents / carers,

Schools are working closely with the Local Authority and the Headteacher Associations in order to offer a consistent and safe response to the current crisis. The health and safety of children and young people is everyone's priority and I wanted to inform you about our ongoing arrangements to keep children safe during this period of school closure.

To ensure we are able to continue to support you and your children, and as part of our safeguarding arrangements, we will be making regular contact with you during the closure period. This will be by phone, email and / or home visits. All children have been allocated a 'lead worker' *(use your own title here)* and they will be your main point of contact during this time.

(Insert your own arrangements, taking into account the guidance above)

We understand how worrying it is for you during this time and we will do everything we can to continue to support our children and families. It is vital that you support us in arrangements going forward and we will keep you informed of any important changes. Meanwhile, if you need to contact the school, you can do so by *(insert your own arrangements here)*

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Appendix E – letter to parents / carers (for pupils with a Care, CP or CIN Plan)

Dear Parents / Carers,

Schools are working closely with the Local Authority and the Headteacher Associations in order to offer a consistent and safe response to the current crisis. The health and safety of children and young people is everyone's priority and I wanted to inform you about our ongoing arrangements to keep children safe during this period of school closure.

The government has advised that schools should be accessible for any child with a Social Worker. As part of our ongoing safeguarding arrangements, we will continue to work with other partners (as we do now) to support children and families. This will include making regular contact with you during the closure period. This will be by phone, email and / or home visits. All children have been allocated a 'lead worker' *(use your own title here)* and they will be your main point of contact during this time.

(Insert your own arrangements, taking into account the guidance above)

We understand how worrying it is for you during this time and we will do everything we can to continue to support our children and families. It is vital that you support us with these arrangements going forward and we will keep you informed of any important changes. Meanwhile, if you need to contact the school, you can do so by *(insert your own arrangements here)*