

# **Annex to Child Protection Policy for Schools in response to Covid 19**

**Education and Children's Services**

Cyngor Sir Gâr  
**Carmarthenshire**  
County Council



## **Annex to Child Protection Policy in response to Covid 19**

### **Context**

Safeguarding children is a critical area for Social Services and Children's Services. Emergency and Duty teams will remain in operation to receive calls and referrals about children at risk of harm, abuse or neglect.

### **Child protection policy**

School settings will already have a child protection policy in place. This annex summarizes key COVID-19 related changes and should be read as an extension to the School's existing Child Protection Policy.

This guidance will be reviewed as circumstances continue to evolve. It is important that all staff and volunteers are aware of this new guidance and are kept up to date as it is revised. This guidance should be available to all staff and parents e.g. via the school website.

In line with the existing Child Protection Policy, arrangements for reporting a concern remain the same:

- Where staff and volunteers have any concerns about a child, it is important that they keep written records of concerns about children, using the school's cause for concern forms (noting the date, event and action taken). These should be handed to/ shared with the Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) immediately.
- Children's services reporting mechanisms remain the same and, where threshold for referral to Children's Services has been met, the DSP should complete a Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) and send it to the Central Referral Team.
- **All child protection referrals go to the**
- **Central Referral Team-**
- **☎ 01554 742322                      ✉ [CRTChildren@carmarthenshire.gov.uk](mailto:CRTChildren@carmarthenshire.gov.uk)**
- **Out of Hours- ☎ 0300 333 2222.**

- The thresholds for referrals to Children’s Services remain in line with the CYSUR “Regional Thresholds & Eligibility for Support” document. The existing “Guidance for Schools- Consent for Referrals to Children’s Services” should also be considered. Where DSPs/ Headteachers wish to seek advice in relation to this, then they can contact one of the following local authority officers in the School Safeguarding and Attendance Team:

Caryl Davies- safeguarding in education officer- 01554 742369

Rhona Evans- team manager- 07785716992/ 01554 742197

Becky Thomas- senior school based social worker 01554 742373

Also:

John Fleming- Local Authority Child Protection Officer (LADO- 01267 246595

### **Specific considerations for the Covid 19 crisis**

- It is important for all school staff to continue to work with and support children’s social workers. Children who have a social worker include those who have a child protection plan, those with a care and support plan and those who are looked after by the Local Authority. Some families need more support than others and attending education settings is an important protective factor for children receiving support from a social worker. These vulnerable children may therefore attend the childcare hubs within the Local Authority. Where social workers need to visit a child within the childcare hubs, the social worker should provide as much notice to the school as is practicable. Where such a visit is made, there is an expectation that the DSP/ headteacher from the hub will update the headteacher of the pupil’s main school with regards to this. During any social worker/ essential worker visiting the school, safe Covid 19 practice (including PPE) and social distancing must be observed alongside usual procedures for visitors to school premises such as signing in and out.
- Where the DSP/ Headteacher in a childcare hub setting is required to make a referral to Children’s Services in respect of a child it is important that the

Headteacher of the child's main school is updated with regards to this and that, where possible, the referral is discussed with them.

### **Childcare provision**

Only a small minority of children should be attending childcare settings. These should be the children of critical workers and vulnerable children. Due to crucial social distancing requirements, this will mean spreading the provision over a number of settings.

The '**Keeping learners safe**' guidance continues to apply to school settings. Whilst acknowledging the pressure that settings are under, they must continue to be safe places for children.

The way settings are currently operating in response to coronavirus is different, **but many important principles remain the same:**

- the best interests of children must always continue to come first
- if anyone in a school has a safeguarding concern about any child they should continue to act immediately, in line with the child protection policy
- a designated safeguarding person (DSP) should be available and easily identified
- unsuitable people must not enter the children's workforce and/or gain access to children
- children should continue to be protected when they are online
- schools should, as far as possible, take a whole setting approach to safeguarding. This will ensure that any new policies and processes in response to coronavirus are not weakening their approach to safeguarding or undermining their child protection policy.

Welsh Government state that schools should provide care for as small a number of children as possible: children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

### **Identifying vulnerable pupils**

Vulnerable pupils refer to children who are supported by social care and those with safeguarding and welfare needs, including:

- Pupils with a Care and Support Plan
- Pupils who are on the Child Protection register
- Pupils who are Children Looked After (LAC)
- Pupils with a Care and Support Plan because of a disability (CDT)

Schools should maintain regular contact with vulnerable pupils at this time.

### **Other pupils with identified needs, include:**

- Pupils with a Statement of Educational Need
- Pupils who attend a special school / unit / EOTAS provision
- Young carers
- Pupils who are involved with the Youth Service
- Pupils who are involved with Team Around the Family (TAF)
- Pupils regularly supported by an ELSA / Area 43 counselling service

The above is not an exhaustive list.

Schools will know their pupils best and will be best placed to determine who will benefit from regular phone contact.

### **What does 'good practice' in supporting vulnerable pupils look like?**

- Pupils identified as vulnerable and their parents will have contact from staff, **at least once per week.**
- When parents inform that they are isolating or shielding at home, learning can continue at home through work provided.
- All vulnerable families may have additional contact and support, with any concerns reported and recorded.
- An onsite placement in a Carmarthenshire Hub will be made available if requested.

Further information can be found in "Maintaining contact with vulnerable pupils in Carmarthenshire during Covid-19 – guidance for schools".

## **Peer on Peer abuse and harmful sexual behaviour in children**

Staff should be alert to any indicators of abuse or harm in children, including sexually harmful behaviors and should follow the existing safeguarding processes within the school to ensure that any such instances of harmful sexual behaviour are reported immediately to the DSP/ headteacher.

- Further advice is available in the [Wales practice guides](#):

*Harmful sexual behaviours' (HSB) can be defined as: sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people under the age of 18 years that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards themselves or others, or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult. This definition of HSB includes both contact and non-contact behaviours (grooming, exhibitionism, voyeurism and sexting or recording images of sexual acts via smart phones or social media applications).*

Where there are concerns about harmful sexual behaviour, the DSP/ Headteacher should seek advice from Children's Services. This must include a discussion about keeping any other children who reside with the child, or with whom the child has contact, safe. This should include consideration of safe management within the education setting the child attends.

### **Professional abuse concerns**

- Where there are concerns about a staff member or volunteer who may pose a safeguarding risk to children, all reports should be made to the DSP/ headteacher immediately. In the event of a child protection allegation being made against a member of staff, the person in receipt of that allegation must immediately pass details of the concern to the Headteacher/ DSP or in their absence a member of staff with Headteacher/ DSP responsibilities. The Headteacher/ DSP will then

contact CRT to discuss the next steps in accordance with statutory guidance. Further information can be accessed via the [Wales safeguarding procedures website](#). Staff should not confront the person the allegation is against or share information with them. They should make a written record of the information (using where possible, the child's / adult's own words), including the time, date and place where the alleged incident took place, what was said and anyone else present

- Sign and date the written record
- Immediately report the matter to the DSP/ headteacher (within their agency)

Where the DSP/ headteacher is the subject of the allegation, the information should be reported to a more Senior Manager who will then seek advice from Children's Services and inform the relevant Chair of Governors. The reporting person should clearly highlight that this is a safeguarding allegation/concern in relation to a professional, volunteer or carer.

- The names and contact details of senior managers are as follows:

Elin Forsyth 07584004000

Marian Morgan 07870515492

Llinos Jones 07973879908

### **Safeguarding pupils**

- During this period, the school should consider arrangements to keep children not physically attending the school setting safe, especially online. In most cases, the

majority of children will not be physically attending the school. It is important that all staff who interact with children, including online, continue to look out for signs a child may be at risk. Any such concerns should be dealt with as per the child protection policy and where appropriate referrals should still be made to children's social care and as required the police. There is a general expectation that existing, core staff will have undertaken foundation level (whole school) safeguarding training.

The starting point for online teaching should be that the same principles as set out in the school's staff behaviour/ staff conduct policy and/ or ESafety policy. This policy should amongst other things include acceptable use of technologies, staff pupil/student relationships and communication including the use of social media. The principles set out in the [guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings published by the Safer Recruitment Consortium](#) may also help schools satisfy themselves that their staff behaviour policies are robust and effective.

Schools should ensure any use of online learning tools and systems is in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

An essential part of the online planning process will be ensuring children who are being asked to work online have very clear reporting routes in place so they can raise any concerns whilst online. As well as reporting routes back to the school this should also signpost children to age appropriate practical support from the likes of:

- [Childline](#) - for support
- [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) - to report and remove harmful online content
- [CEOP](#) - for advice on making a report about online abuse

Schools will need to maintain regular contact with pupils to ensure their safety and wellbeing during this time. Those communications should be used to reinforce the importance of children being safe online. It will be especially important for parents and carers to be aware of what their children are being asked to do online, including the sites they will be asked to access and be clear who from the school (if anyone) their child is going to be interacting with online.

Parents and carers may choose to supplement the school online offer with support from online companies and in some cases individual tutors. In their



communications with parents and carers, schools should emphasise the importance of securing online support from a reputable organisation/individual who can provide evidence that they are safe and can be trusted to have access to children. Support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online includes:

- [Internet matters](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- [London Grid for Learning](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- [Net-aware](#) - for support for parents and carers from the NSPCC
- [Parent info](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- [Thinkuknow](#) - for advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online
- [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) - advice for parents and carers

Recently published [guidance from the UK Safer Internet Centre on safe remote learning](#) and from the [London Grid for Learning on the use of videos and livestreaming](#) could help plan online lessons and/or activities and plan them safely. The [UK Council for Internet Safety provides information to help governing boards and proprietors assure themselves](#) that any new arrangements continue to effectively safeguard children online.

The [UK Safer Internet Centre's professional online safety helpline](#) also provides support for the children's workforce with any online safety issues they face. Local authorities may also be able to provide support.

The department encourages schools to share this support with parents and carers.

### **Designated safeguarding person (DSP)**

The optimal scenario for any school setting providing care for children is to have a trained DSP available on site. It is recognized this may be a challenge for many settings at this time. Therefore, sharing trained DSPs with other schools can be explored (for example on a Rota system) to ensure that the childcare hubs have a DSP who is available on site. Where a trained DSP or deputy is not

on site **and there is no other option**, then it is recommended a senior leader at the school takes responsibility for coordinating safeguarding and that robust arrangements are in place for them to seek advice from a trained DSP who is available to contact via phone, email or skype.

It is important that all staff and volunteers have access to a trained DSP and know on any given day who that person is, how and where to record concerns and who to raise concerns with. This includes knowing which senior officer to contact in the event of a professional abuse allegation against the headteacher/ DSP.

Every school will face unique challenges at this time. However, every provision in schools setting should continue to operate safeguarding procedures and follow the statutory guidance.

It is acknowledged that DSP training is very unlikely to take place during this period. For the period COVID-19 measures are in place, a DSP who has been trained will continue to be classed as a trained DSP even if they have recently missed their refresher training.

### **Attendance**

Schools and social workers should be agreeing with families which vulnerable children should be attending and the school should then follow up on any child that they were expecting to attend, who does not. Schools should also follow up with any parent or carer who has arranged care for their children and the children subsequently do not attend. To support the above, schools should take the opportunity when communicating with parents and carers to confirm emergency contact numbers are correct and ask for any additional emergency contact numbers where they are available. In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at school, or discontinues, the school should notify the social worker immediately. Schools should also notify the social worker if:

- a pupil on the child protection register is excluded either for a fixed term or permanently

- if there is an unexplained absence of a pupil on the child protection register of more than two days duration from school (or one day following a weekend)

Where there are concerns about lack of response from a family and/ or nonattendance of a child, then the DSP/ headteacher can seek advice from the School Safeguarding and Attendance team.

### **Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff**

It remains essential that people who are unsuitable are not allowed to enter the children's workforce or gain access to children. If schools are recruiting new staff, they should continue to follow the relevant safer recruitment processes for their setting.

Where schools are utilising volunteers, they should continue to follow the relevant safe recruitment guidance. Under no circumstances should a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

Regarding members of the school workforce already engaging in regulated activity and who already have the appropriate DBS check, there is no expectation that a new DBS check should be obtained where that member of the workforce temporarily moves to another school to support the care of children. The type of setting on the DBS check, for example a specific category of school, is not a barrier. The same principle applies if childcare workers within the Local authority are moved to work temporarily in a school setting.

Whilst acknowledging the challenge of the current environment, it is essential from a safeguarding perspective that any school is aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers will be in the school and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in regulated activity. The DSP/ headteacher should also use daily briefing sessions with staff ( both morning and pm if there is change of staff during the day) to ensure they are aware of this policy and are clear about the safeguarding arrangements within the school setting.

