

COVID-19 Children and Young People (CYP) Response Plan for education settings – White Hall Academy – January 2021

On 4th January 2021, the Government announced a further national COVID19 lockdown period, to take effect from 6th January 2021. During this period of lockdown, schools, alternative provision, special schools, and colleges will remain open to [vulnerable CYP](#) and the children of critical workers only. For these pupils, the protective measures in place means that any risks are managed and controlled.

Where a remote learning offer is in place, 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. It is also very important to maintain contact with CYP to help support their emotional wellbeing and to enable schools to plan appropriately for their reintegration.

Settings should have in place a [child protection policy](#) which sets out safeguarding arrangements. Settings will decide the means and frequency of contact with CYP and their 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.

Settings will be familiar with the framework below, issued in Spring 2020. The purpose of this is to support settings in fulfilling their safeguarding responsibilities during periods of remote learning. 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.



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Level of need	Cohort	Education placement or offer	Education setting intervention	LA support / intervention and support from other agencies
<p>UNIVERSAL</p>	<p>All CYP on roll at a mainstream school</p>	<p>All mainstream schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the needs of all CYP. Identify all pupils deemed to be vulnerable and record on WHA – Vulnerable List. • Provide information to remind all CYP and parents / carers about online safety and how to report concerns <p><u>Arrangements for welfare checks:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Class teacher and LSA will be in contact with the children daily.</i> ➤ <i>Contact will be recorded on the Telephone Contact List and any actions required from the Safeguarding, SEND or Pastoral Team recorded.</i> ➤ <i>Additional contact will be made of the children are not accessing the remote learning.</i> 	<p>Early Years Education Partner</p> <p>Essex Child & Family Wellbeing Service</p> <p>Essex Youth Service</p> <p>School Effectiveness Partner</p> <p>Voluntary agencies</p> <p><i>Details of local agencies who could provide a service are available in the C&FH Directory of Services</i></p>

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions from the Telephone Contact Sheet will be assessed and any children who are becoming 'vulnerable' taken. 	
ADDITIONAL	<p>CYP with additional need (for example, medical, mental health, SEN, behavioural, domestic abuse, CWD, those working with Family Solutions or with other vulnerabilities identified by the school)</p> <p>CYP with FSM eligibility</p> <p>CYP who have received a 'shielding letter'</p> <p>CYP with a sensory and / or physical</p>	All mainstream schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information to remind all CYP and parents / carers about online safety and how to report concerns <p><u>Arrangements for welfare checks:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Class teacher and LSA will be in contact the children daily (zoom, ClassDojo or by telephone)</i> • <i>Contact will be recorded on the 'Telephone Contact' form and any actions required from the Safeguarding, SEND or Pastoral Team recorded.</i> • <i>A member of the Safeguarding or Pastoral Team will contact parents weekly of:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Children with Disabilities,</i> • <i>Special Guardianship Orders</i> • <i>Looked After Children</i> 	<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> <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>

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<p>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> <p>Education Access / SEND Team maintained list (Not on Roll)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families working with Family Solutions. • Key information/actions to be shared with the allocated social worker. • SENCOs will contact parents/carers weekly of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Children with an SEND ➢ Pupils who are Shielding ➢ Children with Disabilities • Additional contact will be made of the children are not accessing the remote learning. • Where there are concerns about a CYP and a multi-agency approach is felt helpful, organise a virtual TAF (Team Around the Family) meeting • Request support via Essex Effective Support 	<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>New starters</p> <p>Families with English as an Additional Language (EAL)</p> <p>LGBTQ</p> <p>CYP from a Traveller family</p>			<p><i>Details of local agencies who could provide a service are available in the C&FH Directory of Services</i></p>
<p>INTENSIVE</p>	<p>CYP with a mental health issue</p> <p>CYP where there are domestic abuse issues (either living with / victim of or perpetrator)</p> <p>CYP at risk of radicalisation / PREVENT issues</p> <p>Young carers</p>	<p>All mainstream schools</p> <p>PRUs</p> <p>Alternative Provisions</p> <p>Education Access Team maintained list (NOR)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out a risk assessment and review regularly. Share with other agencies as appropriate. • Provide information to remind all CYP and parents / carers about online safety and how to report concerns • <u>Arrangements for welfare checks:</u> • <i>Class teacher and LSA will be in contact the children daily (zoom, ClassDojo or by telephone)</i> • <i>Contact will be recorded on the 'Telephone Contact' form and any</i> 	<p>Critical Incident Response</p> <p>Education Access Team</p> <p>Education Psychology Service</p> <p>Education Safeguarding Officer (MARAC)</p> <p>Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service</p> <p>Essex Child & Family Wellbeing Service</p>

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	Young offenders		<p>actions required from the Safeguarding, SEND or Pastoral Team recorded.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A member of the Safeguarding or Pastoral Team will contact parents weekly of pupils who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Have a mental health issue ➢ History of DV in the home/family ➢ At risk of radicalisation • Additional contact will be made of the children are not accessing the remote learning. • Where there are concerns about a CYP and a multi-agency approach is felt helpful, organise a virtual TAF (Team Around the Family) meeting • Request support via Essex Effective Support • Contact C&FH to discuss any potential PREVENT issues and / or 	<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>
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			discuss with the Education PREVENT Lead (<i>Jo Barclay, Head of Education Safeguarding and Wellbeing</i>)	
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<p>SPECIALIST</p>	<p>Child in Care (CIC)</p> <p>CYP subject to a Child Protection (CP) Plan</p> <p>CYP subject to a Child in Need (CIN) Plan</p> <p>CYP with a mental health issue</p> <p>CYP with an EHCP</p>	<p>All mainstream schools</p> <p>Special schools</p> <p>Special residential schools</p> <p>Adolescent Psychiatric Units</p> <p>PRUs</p> <p>Education Access Team maintained list (NOR)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out a risk assessment and review regularly. Share with other agencies as appropriate. • Provide information to remind all CYP and parents / carers about online safety and how to report concerns <p><u>Arrangements for welfare checks:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Class teacher and LSA will be in contact the children daily (zoom, ClassDojo or by telephone)</i> • <i>Contact will be recorded on the ‘Telephone Contact’ form and any actions required from the Safeguarding, SEND or Pastoral Team recorded.</i> • <i>A member of the Safeguarding or Pastoral Team will contact parents weekly of pupils who:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Are on a CP or CIN plan</i> ➤ <i>Key information/actions will be shared with the allocated social worker.</i> • <i>SENCOs will contact parents/carers weekly of:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Children with an EHCP</i> ➤ <i>Children with Disabilities</i> 	<p>Critical Incident Response</p> <p>Education Psychology Service</p> <p>Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service</p> <p>Essex Child & Family Wellbeing Service (for CiC)</p> <p>Essex Family Solutions</p> <p>Essex local offer</p> <p>Essex Team Around the Family Support</p> <p>Essex Youth Service</p> <p>Essex Youth Offending Service</p> <p>Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Team (MARAT)</p> <p>School Effectiveness Partner</p> <p>Virtual School</p>
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Additional contact will be made of the children are not accessing the remote learning.• Attend CP Case Conferences, Core Group meetings and CIN meetings as required and provide reports as required.• Attend virtual Statutory Reviews for CiC and provide reports as required• Link with Virtual School Headteacher	
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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:

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

Where a remote learning offer is in place, 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. It is also very important to maintain contact with CYP to help support their emotional wellbeing, help them to feel connected and to enable schools to plan appropriately for their reintegration.

Settings will use their knowledge of CYP and families in informing the risk assessments to determine the method and frequency of contact with the pupil and parents / carers and what constitutes an adequate welfare check. 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. It is obviously helpful where a member of staff has regular online contact with a pupil as part of their education offer, as this can feed into welfare check arrangements. However, a joint weekly phone call to the child and parent is advisable, as it is more personal and will enable the setting to connect directly with the child. This will be particularly

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important where no other contact with the child has been possible. It will also enable the setting to develop and maintain positive relationships with home. Some parents / carers may not answer a call from an ‘anonymous’ number or may just be unwilling to engage with the setting. Email contact is an alternative, as some parents / carers may be more willing to use this as a means of communication and it provides an audit trail. However, settings should consider whether no direct contact with a child is a safeguarding concern and whether further action is required to ensure a child is safe (*see section 2 below*).

During periods of remote learning, risk assessments and plans will need to 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 minimum of a weekly welfare check). Equally, some CYP will have vulnerabilities and therefore considered to be at higher risk although, once there are support mechanisms in place, they may then 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. 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. As COVID-19 continues to impact on families in many ways, it is important there is a mechanism for any concerns, stresses or bereavements to be identified so the setting is able to 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, with particular attention given to the wellbeing of the CYP in the light of emerging evidence about a deterioration in the mental health and wellbeing of CYP as a result of COVID-19 related issues.

Where other agencies are already involved, risk assessments and planning should continue to be a joint activity so the approach and interventions can be co-ordinated. 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 is required. Templates and other materials to support this process are available

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under [resources for professionals](#). 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.

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

Settings should have informed all parents / carers of safeguarding arrangements in the event of periods of remote learning, 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.

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

Schools and other educational settings and their staff form part of the wider safeguarding system for CYP. Where it has been necessary to adapt usual safeguarding arrangements to respond to remote learning, any changes should be clearly communicated to all staff and reflected in the Child Protection Policy. It is important that staff are alert to signs of abuse so that, during their contact with pupils and families, they are able to identify concerns and know how to report them. The Designated Lead or Deputy Designated Lead (DL or DDL) will then decide how to respond to any concerns raised and progress it accordingly, liaising with other agencies as appropriate in the usual way.

[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'.

4. Reviewing cases

As already explained, it is important for risk assessments and plans to be regularly reviewed and updated to meet need. Where there is an existing mechanism for doing this (for example 'vulnerable pupil panels'), these discussions could take place there (virtually if necessary). Where there is not an existing process, settings should consider how cases are reviewed to ensure risk assessments and plans are responsive and fit for purpose. Discussions at reviews should be recorded and should include the rationale for decision making.

5. Child Protection (CP) Records

It is essential that robust recording of all safeguarding and child protection matters continues, and settings must have arrangements in place for this to be done effectively. All staff must be clear what and how to record concerns 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 and DDL are able to access child protection 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).

6. 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 these arrangements form part of the setting's safeguarding processes 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 and pupils. 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 in response to the current situation (for example, how to withhold phone numbers). If staff wish to come on site

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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 system of protective measures would apply.

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. All contacts must be 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). There should be processes in place to ensure key staff 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 in usual working circumstances, staff may encounter difficult and / or distressing discussions with parents, although perhaps more so during the current 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. Staff should be given the opportunity to share any concerns and discuss anything which makes them uncomfortable – it should be understood that staff are able to seek advice on an issue rather than worry about it.

7. Safeguarding / Child Protection Policy

Settings should share their current [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 as appropriate to ensure it accurately reflects their own current processes and arrangements.

8. What to do if an 'eligible' CYP does not attend

For those CYP eligible to attend, settings should continue to set clear expectations in respect of pupil absence reporting. Where parents fail to make contact to notify and provide reasons for their child's absence, settings should seek to make contact with the family via telephone calls, text messages, emails and, where the absence causes safeguarding concerns, should consider making a visit to the home address to establish why the pupil is not attending. Where all efforts to make contact with the family prove unsuccessful, settings should consider linking with other agencies as appropriate.

9. What to do if the Designated Lead and Deputy is unable to attend on site

The Designated Lead and Deputy Designated Lead will be able to provide the usual Level 3 cover remotely, if they are unable to attend on site (if they are self-isolating). In the event they are too ill to undertake the Designated Lead / Level 3 role, there should be discussion with the appropriate School Effectiveness Partner, Head of Education or Jo Barclay, Head of Education Safeguarding and Wellbeing, to ensure there is Level 3 cover to provide advice and guidance to staff.

10. Mental Health and Wellbeing

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It is important to recognise the significance of schools and other educational settings in supporting the emotional wellbeing and resilience of CYP. In line with a Trauma Perceptive Approach (compassion and kindness, hope, connection and belonging), settings are a safe space in which members of the community can support each other and socially connect with their peers. In addition, for all CYP, and particularly many of our most vulnerable CYP, settings are an important protective factor. This latest period of closure will be a significant setback for many CYP, including those who were due to take examinations which determine their future options and are now faced with uncertainty about this.

Local research into the impact of COVID-19 upon CYP in Essex tells us that there is increasing concern around feelings of loneliness and isolation as a result of the prolonged lockdown and restrictive measures. In addition, CYP have shared growing concern over the impact of the disruption to education on their futures. Stresses and setbacks can, at times, trigger feelings of anxiety, trauma and a sense of bereavement. To experience all these feelings (anxiety, trauma and bereavement - in its widest sense) at one time, in an unpredictable and unplanned fashion is significant for the developing CYP.

If staff have a concern about the mental health of a child that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken, following the child Protection policy and speaking to the DL or DDL.

The local authority has produced guidance and materials for all settings which focus specifically on Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health. available on [ESI / COVID-19](#) (**Appendix C**)

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