

Cardiff Council Children's Services

Safeguarding Children at Risk - Arrangements and Guidance for Partner Agencies 2020

**Guide to Children's Services response to safeguard children during
the COVID-19 outbreak**

This guidance has been developed so that professionals are aware of the operating model which Children's Services have adapted to during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the lead Safeguarding agency it is important for partners to also understand how the changes will be achieved whilst protecting children and young people from harm and delivering a duty of care to our workforce.

It is understood that during this time existing mental conditions, poverty, domestic abuse and other factors which impact on parenting may increase concerns for professionals and members of the public. Therefore we need to ensure that all services and multi-agency working continues to protect the children and young people in our city.

This guidance offers colleagues from partner agencies a quick guide on how our service will operate over the coming weeks and months. This will be subject to ongoing review and change as we are presented with further information.

Deborah Driffield (Assistant Director, Children's Services)

Childrens Services Contact Numbers:

Local Authority Out of Hours Emergency Duty Team	029 2078 8570
Cardiff Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, MASH	029 2053 6490 (Option 3)
Gateway	029 2059 6490 (Option 1)
Intake and Assessment Teams	029 2053 6400
Locality Team North Locality Team South Locality Team East	029 2053 6490 (Option 2) 029 2087 1163 (Hafan Gobaith)
11+ Team	029 2053 6400
Youth Offending Service	029 2233 0355
Fostering Service	029 2053 6490 (Option 2)
Safeguarding and Reviewing Team	029 2233 0900

Undertaking Visits Guidance for all Children's Services Teams

- The cases identified where there are significant child protection risks or an imminent risk to the child or a risk of placement breakdown will be visited (more information regarding this will be provided later within this document).
- Prior to any visits being agreed the Team Managers will need to seek approval from the Operational Manager.
- Less urgent work will be undertaken by telephone / conference calling such as wellbeing assessments.

This guidance will help multi agency partners understand what services will be provided to children and young people throughout the COVID-19 period.

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Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

MASH facilitates safeguarding by working together, in one place, sharing information and making collaborative decisions. MASH is the 'front door' for all adult at risk and child safeguarding referrals, including high risk domestic abuse, human trafficking, FGM and Modern Slavery.

Referrals

MASH will continue to receive a MARF (Multi Agency Referral Form) from professionals and Police Notifications. Professionals and members of the public can also call the number provided above should they need to speak to a duty social worker. This process remains the same.

Referrals will continue to be screened risk assessed and rag rated (Red, Amber and Green) relating to level of risk and strategy discussions will continue to take place where there have been concerns identified for any child who is deemed to be at risk of significant harm.

Strategy Discussions / Meetings

Strategy Discussions will continue to involve relevant professionals to ensure multi-agency working is ongoing for both MASH and across Children's Services Teams.

Strategy Meetings will be convened with all multi agency partners when necessary across Children's Services Teams which will be arranged by Skype or telephone conference calling.

All Children's Services MASH staff are currently working remotely and have access to mobile phones and their e-mails once referrals are received and available should professionals have any concerns / queries.

Strategy discussion / meetings requests will be sent to the PPU inbox which will be allocated to designated police officers to follow up.

Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

MAPPA meetings are taking place virtually. Children's Services will maintain attendance at the different levels as usual (Independent Reviewing Officer service attend MAPPA 2, Operational Managers Level 3).

In relation to contingency plans, if there is a reduction in staffing the duty managers and Operational Managers on shift will attend meetings.

Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

Initially in COVID-19 planning, the Police changed MARAC from a physical meeting to a paper exercise coordinated by MARAC coordinator who gathered agency information and shared with the Police chair for actions and then to partners for comments. This arrangement is currently being reviewed and it is likely that there may be a change to virtual meetings with key partners on a fortnightly basis.

Currently the Principal Social Workers from MASH attend MARAC and should staffing reduce, as a contingency the Team Manager will identify an experienced member of the team to attend.

Domestic Abuse

Daily Domestic Violence discussions continue to be held in MASH with partners to risk assess, gain updates and escalate any cases if necessary to strategy discussion. Police are undertaking welfare checks only on high risk cases where domestic abuse is a concern and the DS from the Domestic Abuse Unit will make the overriding decision on whether a face to face visit is approved. RISE continue to support and visit high risk cases.

Procedural Response to Unexpected Death In Childhood (PRUDiC)

PRUDiC is a multi-agency procedural response when a decision has been made by the police that the death of a baby, child or young person up to the 18th birthday, is unexpected. PRUDiC applies to all deaths in children except stillbirths; neonates who have never been discharged into the community and the death is expected; and children with a life-limiting condition known to Palliative Care.

PRUDiC process will continue to apply unchanged where there is an unexpected death of a child that meets the criteria. This decision is made by the police and the initial meeting process is coordinated by the UHB Safeguarding Team.

The relevant Children's Services Operational Manager will be identified to attend the meeting virtually. The Children's Services Operational Manager will also ensure that Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and Welsh Government (WG) are informed as part of the process.

Professional Concerns

Cardiff Professional Concerns Team continues to receive and screen referrals and notifications remotely. Meetings are happening virtually via Skype or video / conference call.

If the matter is serious and the employee / volunteer may need to be suspended pending the criminal or professional concerns process, then Lynda Gallagher will need to discuss further actions with the police and/or employer / voluntary organisation. A decision could then be made remotely.

Contingency plans are in place should lead officers not be available to receive referrals and enquiries – these will be managed by the Children's Services MASH Manager and interim Business Support.

Children's Services Teams

All Children's Services teams are working remotely and all professionals should continue to contact allocated social workers on the numbers provided above. Professionals who are involved with the child / family will already have access to social workers mobile numbers as a point of contact. All social workers have access to their e-mails as an additional form of communication.

Below there is additional information in relation to the operating model for individual teams across Children's Services.

Intake and Assessment and Pre-Birth Teams

These teams will continue to be allocated wellbeing assessments and s47 investigations. Please see further guidance in respect of wellbeing assessments and s47 investigations below.

Locality Teams (North, South and East)

In the locality teams the cases which are not deemed to be high risk cases will be managed on a duty system where professionals will be able to contact the duty social workers and managers on the number provided above for open cases. These duty social workers will be based in Hafan Gobaith. The high risk cases will continue to be allocated to a social worker. Please find further guidance on Child Protection visits, Children Looked After visits and conferences under these headings.

11+ Team

The Adolescent Service continues to facilitate and chair exploitation strategy meetings for high risk young people where the following one or more criteria applies:

- The risk needs to be shared with other professionals working with the young person and their families.
- Information needs to be shared between Children's Services and Police under the Strategy Meeting procedures, such as names of wider peer groups, perpetrators or known hot spots that can link into or from intelligence.
- Where a Strategy Meeting is required to initiate an urgent response from Children's Services or/and Police, such as a Child Abduction Warning Notice (CAWN).

Strategy meetings are being held either by Skype or conference call facilities.

Youth Offending Service (YOS)

All YOS staff are home working and the YOS Building (John Kane Centre) is closed. Members of staff are keeping in contact with young people / families via WhatsApp video calling, WhatsApp messaging and phone calls. The team are also operating panels via video calling.

Members of staff are using Skype to communicate with professionals, attend Child Protection conferences, and Children Looked After reviews. They are also using telephone conferencing. Contact has been made with young people in prisons and YOS case managers work mobile numbers are in the approved numbers list so young people can have contact with their case managers directly.

Fostering Service

All members of the team are home working and will be available on the number provided above. Duty system is now operating on this basis. The daily rota is covered by one Team Manager or Principal Social Worker, one supervising social worker and one duty

worker on a daily basis. All staff are in contact with foster carers or providers regularly. Virtual visits and Annual Reviews are being conducted by phone and WhatsApp video.

Virtual attendance is taking place by supervising social workers at Children Looked After reviews along with supervision with foster carers by Skype or Conference Calls. Communication continues with foster carers and providers encouraging them to contact the office and their supervising social worker with queries.

Supervising social workers continue to have contact with case management social workers via e-mail and Skype where applicable to discuss children and cases. The team are also providing reports on contingency planning about welfare and health of all carers in case of risk to children. There are also weekly reviews undertaken on placement stability.

Wellbeing Assessments / Visits

Wellbeing assessments will be completed by virtual contact via WhatsApp messaging, WhatsApp video / conference calling with children / young people and their families. The lateral checks with multi agency partners will continue as part of an ongoing assessment.

Section 47 Child Protection Investigations and Visits

Section 47 investigations will continue to be allocated to social workers. The police will identify whether a joint visit is required in line with any potential criminal investigation.

Social workers will visit the children / young people where there is a high risk / imminent risk to the child and/or which is one unassessed previously. In these circumstances the Operational Manager will approve a face to face visit to the child and family. (Guidance for home visiting must be followed in these circumstances.)

There will be some s47 investigations where virtual visits via WhatsApp Video will be made with the child / family.

In all circumstances the social workers and team managers will identify support networks who can assist to increase safety for the child within the family. In addition lateral checks will take place with police, education and health and third sector agencies as well as discussing what additional virtual contact can be put in place by them as additional safeguards.

Child Protection Medicals examinations will continue in line with health guidance provided from Lead Safeguarding contacts Linda Hughes-Jones and Dr. Katina Kontos.

Initial & Child Protection and Review Conferences

Initial Child Protection Conferences

Initial Child Protection Conferences will continue to take place but will be undertaken remotely using Skype. The conference chair will be present with a minute taker where possible and observing social distancing. Partner agencies will be conference called in using Skype. The parent(s) of the child or children being discussed at conference will also be invited to participate using Skype where they have a smartphone, tablet or laptop. If this is not possible, arrangements will be made to include the parent via telephone conferencing.

Review Child Protection Conferences

The Safeguarding and Reviewing team will facilitate as many Review conferences as is possible, giving priority to those where there are more serious concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children, or where the social worker (and Core Group) is confident about the evidence that harm has reduced, and de-registration is appropriate.

If Review Child Protection Conferences cannot be arranged in the same way as Initial Child Protection Conferences due to capacity, quoracy, practical or other problems, consideration will be given to the conference chair conducting a review as a sequence of separate discussions. In these situations the Conference Chair will:

- Consider all the professional reports as per usual practice.
- Discuss with parent(s) over the phone as fully as possible.
- Discuss with partner agencies over the phone as needed.
- Write a detailed summary which will be the record of the meeting along with professional reports.

Where consideration is being given to removing a child's name from the Child Protection Register using the above system, considerable caution should be used. If there is doubt about the safety of this decision or is not unanimous then the child's name will remain on the Child Protection Register.

Professional Arrangements for Child Protection Conferences

Professionals will be sent a Skype invite by Safeguarding Children Business Support in advance of the Child Protection Conference. Professionals should confirm their attendance via email two days prior to the conference.

Professionals should send their reports two days in advance of the conference to the Safeguarding Business Unit on the following email:
SafeguardingChildren@cardiff.gov.uk

If a professional is unavailable for a Child Protection Conference, their agency will be asked for an alternative representative. As a last resort, they or their agency should arrange to discuss with the Conference Chair their view about registration.

Child Protection Visits

Social workers will continue to review these cases with their managers. The visits will be undertaken virtually unless there is a significant concern of imminent harm and a face to face visit has been approved by the Operational Manager. These cases will be continually reviewed by team managers and in line with when new information / concern is raised from partner agencies / family.

Core Group Meetings

Social work staff will liaise with managers, seeking to co-ordinate Core Group meetings either by Skype, conference call or a combination of separate telephone calls.

Pre- Proceedings / Court Proceedings

The Public Law Outline (PLO) panel continues to consider cases where children are deemed to be at significant risk of harm. Applications for Court continue to be made and hearings are being held virtually. This arrangement is in place for both private law and public law cases.

Child Looked After Reviews

All Child Looked After Reviews are currently being undertaken virtually with the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) speaking to all parties to track and monitor plans. WhatsApp video and Skype are being utilised to facilitate this virtual meeting. Notes and a record of this will be made by the IRO on the existing 'Monitoring Form' and 'Chairs Report'. A reference will be added clearly at the beginning of the report to explain that the review has been held remotely due to the COVID-19 situation.

The child / young person should be spoken to separately before the review, via video conferencing or telephone, to ascertain their views and wishes. They should be included in the review in the same way as other members, where it is possible to do so.

There is also an understanding that full participation in the review by the carer might not be possible due to caring responsibilities for other children. The IRO will therefore take responsibility for ensuring that a separate discussion takes place with them to include their views.

It is recognised that some reviews might need to be completed in stages, via separate telephone or video conferencing. The IRO will endeavor to bring together and communicate the plans and recommendations to all parties.

Child Looked After Visits

All children who are looked after will continue to receive visits virtually. Where there are significant concerns about placement stability or safety then a face to face visit will be considered with the Operational Manager and other support considered at this time.

Alternative arrangements have been made in respect of young people continuing to receive their weekly allowance so that young people have access to this readily.

Support Services

Support4Families

The teams continue to offer consultations on Wednesdays to social workers and continue to receive referrals for professionals and families alike. Visits are only taking place when it is deemed that a family may require statutory intervention and will be referred to the Intake and Assessment Team at that point. All members of the team continue to contact families virtually by telephone / WhatsApp videos.

Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS)

This service continues to offer support to the parents they are working with currently and are taking new referrals in respect of mental health, domestic abuse and substance

misuse. The interventions are offered via WhatsApp video calls / telephone calls. The team will offer a brief intervention to families for safety planning over 3-4 sessions.

Adolescent Resource Centre (ARC)

This service will continue to provide virtual support by WhatsApp / phone calls to young people and their families. They will undertake visits when agreed by the Operational Manager for high risk cases of placement breakdown and where there are significant concerns about safety.

Think Safe! Team

The think safe team will continue to screen all triggers on exploitation cases where advice is needed from Children's Services Staff. The team also continue to provide support to young people and their families virtually by phone or WhatsApp video. They will also continue to liaise with the police closely to continue to monitor ongoing risks to young people in the community and on individual cases.

Rapid Response / Family Support

These teams continue to offer interventions to families by telephone and WhatsApp video calls. For the children who have been identified at high risk of harm, face to face visits will be considered and reviewed on a case by case and with Operational Manager approval.