



Education protocol for vulnerable children and young people during the Covid-19 virus

The following offers some guidance and principles in relation to children and young people who have a designated social worker and are thus entitled to an offer from settings, schools or colleges during the Covid-19 national emergency. This protocol acknowledges that whilst the number of children and young people requiring this support is small, the consequence of not doing so would be significant. The Local Authority acknowledges the significant role that schools can play in keeping our most vulnerable children and young people safe at this time and in providing face to face support with their learning.

Whilst the guidance below is about children with a social worker, the DfE recognised that managers, headteachers and principals will decide that other children are vulnerable too and may need to be treated with the same level of support.

First Principles

Where children can be safely looked after and educated at home, they should be home, in line with guidance from government and Public Health England. Where it is not safe, children and young people must be offered a place at the setting, school or college.

Children and young people's safety is not fixed and needs constant review. Those who require a school place will change over time.

For all vulnerable children and young people who qualify for an offer from the setting, school or college a balance needs to be struck between the risk to health and the safeguarding risks associated with not accessing provision.

Our Ambition

Through effective joint work and clear and continuous lines of communication between the education sector and the local authority, we mitigate the risks to vulnerable children and young people minimising placement ends for children in care and maximising the safety of children in need and children on protection plans.

Children in Care

Children in care, who are at risk of their placement ending as a result of non-attendance at school must be offered a place at their setting, school or college

Children and young people who are settled in placement, where non-attendance at the setting, school or college does not pose a risk to placement should stay at home. This message will be communicated to carers via their child's social worker, via their own supervising social worker and through the communications from the fostering service. **Settings, schools and colleges should not**



make this judgement themselves. If they have concerns they should approach the child's social worker to discuss and should not directly challenge carers. This will avoid stigmatising any carers who have to take up the offer of a place in the setting, school or college in order to maintain their child's placement.

The Virtual School will work closely with our Fostering Services to identify children who are at risk of placements ending and proactively work with the education sector to provide advice, guidance and support where it is required.

Children in need and on protection plans

Children in need or on protection plans, who are at risk as a result of non-attendance at the setting, school or college must be offered a place.

Children and young people should remain at home, where non-attendance at the setting, school or college does not pose a risk to the child or young person. This message will be communicated to parents via their child's social worker. **Setting managers, school and college leaders should not make judgements themselves.** If there are concerns, leaders and managers should liaise with the child's social worker.

Closures

In the event that setting, school or college is unable to offer a place to a vulnerable child or young person that both qualifies for a place under the guidance and requires one in order to be kept safe, the setting manager, school headteacher or college principal will notify the Virtual School Team via this contact: education@york.gov.uk and cc virtualschool@york.gov.uk

Leaders, managers and principals will work with the Local Authority and the Virtual School Head in partnership with the wider sector so that a place can be offered. This may include the use of any local solutions that are developed during this period.

Attendance Monitoring and Reporting

If a vulnerable child or young person is not in the setting, school or college please contact the social worker by email and cc the team manager. **Please do not contact the MASH for anything other than the usual safeguarding referrals and concerns that would require new assessments or signposting.** If necessary school can phone MASH to find out the name of the social worker and manager however the attached children's social care information should help to reduce the need to contact MASH. **Social workers should contact families after receiving an email from school/setting to follow up on any absence to discuss the reason for absence and agree whether the child(ren) should return to school.**

Settings, schools and colleges should have robust arrangements in place to keep in touch with vulnerable children who have permission to remain at home during the COVID 19 outbreak.