

## **Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership Briefing – March 2020**

As you are all aware, the current situation is a challenge to all of our organisations and there will have to be significant changes to the way we work and deliver our services, in particular Statutory Safeguarding duties and responsibilities to safeguard children in Durham.

We wanted to provide you with details of the interim arrangements we are all putting in place. This briefing note is based on current circumstances and arrangements, you will appreciate that this will inevitably be subject to change over the coming weeks.

Partnership working is vital during this current time and multi-agency safeguarding arrangements will continue as usual, however agencies are to be mindful that this may be undertaken in a different way whilst trying to avoid as much face to face contact as possible.

### **Senior Leaders within Durham County Council will continue to review children's circumstances and have implemented the following:**

- Prioritising cases based on situation/circumstances etc.
- Moving to more agile working.
- Carry out multi-agency Strategy Meetings, Initial Child Protection Conferences, Review Child Protection Conferences, Core Groups and Looked After Reviews for children using virtual platforms wherever possible and will continue to work with partners to manage this.
- Face to face home visits will be done based on a risk assessment for the child in conjunction with managers. As much contact as possible with families will be done by phone and through virtual platforms where it is safe to do so. Where staff are visiting family homes, they will do so using guidance from Public Health England which includes the practice of social distancing.
- From Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March Children's Social Care and Early Help will be arranging service delivery into 3 virtual locality hubs based in North, South and East Durham. Each will have a strategic safeguarding manager and will be working with partners in health and education to ensure that we use our collective resources to provide support to those children who are most vulnerable and in need of contact or services. The work of the locality hubs at this time is focused on those children who are CIN; CP or children at risk of becoming Looked After.

- All new referrals for children where there are concerns for their welfare or safety should be made to First Contact in the usual way using the usual referral mechanisms.
- Requesting colleagues across partner agencies should proactively share information within existing multi agency team around family arrangements about families who they know are self-isolating, to avoid any unnecessary home visits and contact, ensuring all are protected from unnecessary exposure to the virus.
- Continually reassess risk and reprioritise work across the partnership to ensure we all continue to provide a safeguarding service to those children and vulnerable adults who are most at risk.

**Senior Leaders across Health organisations have implemented the following:**

- All health partners have business continuity plans which identify Safeguarding Children and Adults and Children who are Looked After as key priority areas.
- All health partners will remain engaged in multiagency discussions including the MASH, MARAC and MAPPA as needed with SPOC arrangements in place.
- Work with our partners to ensure that children who may have experienced abuse or neglect are appropriately and holistically assessed in a timely manner.
- Referrals for paediatric assessment will follow the same pathway of care although children may be assessed in different settings to minimise infection risks as per PHE and RCPCH guidance.
- Mental health support for those in crisis will be still be available.
- Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT) 0-19 service will continue to provide a Safeguarding SPOC service for all staff including the MASH and are taking actions to ensure this will be maintained if there is a reduction in capacity. The 0-19 service will continue to prioritise safeguarding meetings including strategies, ICPCs and RCPCs and core groups, and will use digital methods to maintain representation. Home visits for new babies, (Primary Visits) and visits to children and young people subject to a child protection plan will be maintained. Review Health Assessments will continue on a virtual or face to face basis, dependant on an assessment of cumulative risk.
- Looked After Children's (LAC) Health Assessments are a statutory duty and will continue to be delivered. However, changes for Initial Health Assessments (IHA's) are required in order to deliver assessments safely to patients and protect staff. It is possible that changes to workforce as a result of staff deployment and absence may result in delays in meeting the statutory timescales for the child/young person to be assessed (20 working days from

entering care) but there will be regular communications with our partners on this issue.

- The CCG and Health partners have established mechanisms for regular information sharing for any concerns.
- GP's will be providing primary care health input as needed within the guidance from Public Health England and are a key source of advice and information for multiagency processes

**Durham Constabulary have implemented the following:**

- Developed business continuity plans which involve a tiered response to demand and resourcing levels. Overall, the plan aims to ensure at times of highest demand, business critical functions such as dealing with 999 calls, responding to the most serious incidents and investigating the most serious crimes continue. This is a flexible model which may change daily or even hourly.
- A strong commitment by the Constabulary to maintain safeguarding children and vulnerable adults as a priority. This includes prioritising investigations where there are imminent risks of harm. As resources become more challenged, it is likely that investigators and supervisors will be pooled so that partners may not always be dealing with teams with which they have become familiar.
- Contingency plans include continued information and decision making and safety planning by the Central Referral Unit working within the MASHs, continuing with MARAC, MAPPA, the management of Registered Sex Offenders and providing services for victims through the Sexual Assault Referral Centre. Work in each of these areas will be prioritised in line with levels of risk and harm.
- More detailed plans are being developed to adapt how we work with health colleagues, HM Coroner and other agencies in dealing with sudden and unexpected deaths of both adults and children.
- In relation to the most recent announcement from the Prime Minister (23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020) regarding minimising social gathering and restricting movement, the Constabulary is working with the Government to consider how these rules can most effectively be enforced and will seek to work closely with our communities to ensure that people know what is expected of them. Officers will be continuing respond to emergencies and deal with serious crime.

**Partnership Business unit has implemented the following:**

- We have agreed to cancel all non-urgent partnership meetings (sub-groups, task and finish groups etc.) as well as multi-agency training sessions for the foreseeable time. We will conduct as much of the business as is feasible via e-mail or conference facility where possible when it is possible to do so.
- The Partnership business unit will continue to work throughout and are contactable on the usual e-mail addresses (details shown below).
- We can assure you that we are all working closely together to get through this and will continue to review our contingency plans and staffing capacity and will keep you updated. In the meantime, we would like to thank you all for all the work and support you are providing to support our children, vulnerable adults and their families during this very challenging time.

Statutory Safeguarding Partners

John Pearce, Director of Children Services, Durham County Council

Dave Ashton, Det. Superintendent, Durham Constabulary

Gill Findley, Director of Nursing, Durham Clinical Commissioning Group

Michael Banks, Independent Chair

27th March 2020

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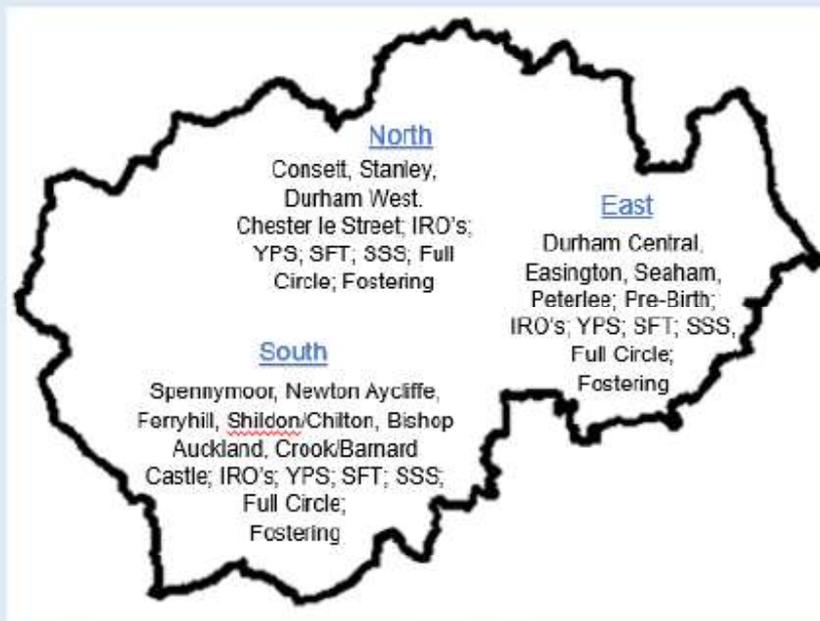
# Three Virtual Children's Safeguarding Hub Model

## Each of the three hubs will bring together:

- One Point Services, Social Care services, health colleagues with other partners likely to join
- Overall management through a Safeguarding Strategic Manager
- The strategic manager for each hub will work with senior managers from FF; OPS and health alongside team managers in localities

### County Wide Services

Disability, First Contact and MASH, EDT; CLA, Adoption, SGO, Placements



**Plus:** Individual Children's Homes and additional temporary accommodation

## Our Temporarily Revised Ambition

### Providing essential children's safeguarding services in County Durham

- Work differently... digitally ... virtually... where we need to
- Relationships are more important than ever ...
- Work closely with colleagues, partners and families even when there are physical restrictions
- Child / young person continues to be at the centre of everything we do
- Support each other and look after ourselves
- Harness our resources to support the most at risk