

New – Children’s Services process to support and enhance safeguarding of vulnerable children.

Returns received today show that East Sussex schools and settings are providing places for 878 children, of whom 260 are classed as “vulnerable”. It is important that schools are encouraging the most vulnerable children to attend school, including over the Easter Holiday period.

The Government sets out the expectations on schools to offer places to vulnerable children;

“...Attending education settings is known as a protective factor for children receiving the support of a social worker. It is right that we prioritise support for those who will benefit the most. We are balancing this carefully with the urgent need to reduce social contact right across society to support our work to reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend provision, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at severe risk. In circumstances where a parent does not want to bring their child to an education setting, and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker and education provider should explore the reasons for this, directly with the parent...”

“...Educational settings may also want to consider how to encourage children and young people to attend provision.

Those with an EHC plan should be risk-assessed by their school in consultation with the local authority and parents, to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a school/college place in order to meet their needs, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home...”

Full guidance can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>

As part of the LA duty for safeguarding children, and supporting schools to safeguard children during the COVID-19 school closures, Children’s Services have worked together to create a new fortnightly process to support:

- The assessment and management of risk for vulnerable children during COVID-19 school closures
- Improved systems of sharing information and utilising resources to monitor at-risk children during school closures
- Identification of barriers to vulnerable children attending school and working together to resolve these so that schools are able to prioritise the right children to attend

Cohort 1: (as defined by the DFE)

- Children open to social care,
- Children with an EHCP,
- Young Carers

Actions for schools

Schools will be sent a spreadsheet on Tuesday 31st March with a list of individual children defined as vulnerable.

Schools will be asked to make a return on their vulnerable list to the LA by **Thursday 2nd April** answering the following questions:

1. Is the child in school Y/N, F/T P/T
2. If not, have you seen or spoken with the child since March 23rd 2020?
3. Do you have an escalating concern for their well-being or safety?
4. What are your plans for safeguarding the child?

All returns will then be analysed and risk assessed by LA teams, and schools may be contacted for further information or discussion where concerns are raised about vulnerable children. As the COVID-19 school closures continue, the levels of risk for children will change, thus the request to schools for returns will be on a fortnightly basis in the first instance.

The email and the spreadsheet with the names of the individual children deemed to be vulnerable will be sent to each school Tuesday 31st March by 9.00 a.m.

Please note the date for return – **12.30p.m. on Thursday 2nd April**. Whilst we recognise that this is a tight deadline, it is essential that the information on our most vulnerable children is received and analysed prior to the Easter period. This will enable all services and schools to work together to identify the most appropriate additional safeguarding resource/ welfare checks where children are thought to be at risk of significant harm.

Your on-going support for safeguarding children during these very challenging times is much appreciated.