



Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Briefing – March 2020

Dear all

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 and vulnerable adults in Darlington.

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 Darlington Borough Council will continue to review child and adult 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 or telephone conference and have/will work with partners to manage this.
- Continue with Strategy Meetings for Adult Safeguarding by virtual platforms or telephone conferencing again working with relevant partners.
- Prioritising the most vulnerable adults based on situation/circumstances etc, and signposting those who do not have support networks around them to various community and voluntary sector groups where possible.
- Where face to face contact is required for all visits, telephoning in advance to clarify it is still safe to visit.
- Requesting colleagues across partner agencies proactively share information 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 Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Safeguarding Adults Team are continuing to work with the Local Authority and providers to ensure that adults who may have experienced or are at risk of abuse are protected in a timely manner. We are continuing to take part in relevant meetings and where necessary facilitate the gathering of information to support decision making.
- 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 (23rd 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.

We are requesting all agencies to share information about visits to children, vulnerable adults and their families to minimise the number of agencies visiting the same families in a short time period and ask that these arrangements are managed locally within existing multi agency arrangements. All professionals can then record this visit and the outcome on their agency records to provide some assurance that the child, vulnerable adult and or family have been seen or visited.

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.

The Partnership business unit will continue to work throughout and are contactable on the usual telephone numbers and e-mail addresses (details shown below).

If there is a need to close any of the building's we will work to ensure that this is communicated across the partnership as soon as possible to avoid any unnecessary

travel. Please be mindful that this situation may change quickly and sometimes with very little notice.

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.

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Adrian Green, Chief Superintendent, Durham Constabulary

Gill Findley, Director of Nursing, Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group

Ann Baxter, Independent Chair/Scrutineer

Statutory Safeguarding Partners

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