

Our Ref: Covid19(7)/HS/MS/CS

23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020

Dear Colleague,

As we move through these unprecedented times, it is clear that schools are going to be critical in ensuring vital services can continue to function and to protect the vulnerable. The response from Lincolnshire schools last week was incredible and we are going to need to draw on every available resource as we progress through the coming weeks and months. Each week will look different, and we will need to review decision making regularly, so your support and partnership is appreciated.

The government has been explicit that every child who can be safely cared for at home should be and that it is school leaders and parents who will make these decisions for the vast majority of children and young people, including those of key workers.

### **Vulnerable Children**

As schools will be aware, current circumstances mean that children who were already vulnerable have the potential to be exposed to increased risk. With this in mind, any decisions about vulnerable children being safer at home may be challenged by the Local Authority and should be reviewed at least monthly. Schools will want to consider their on-going support for vulnerable children who are being cared for at home including telephone support or video call contact.

The Local Authority's approach for the different vulnerable cohorts is outlined below. Where you are required to notify the Local Authority, please do so by emailing the attached form to [VulnerableChildren@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:VulnerableChildren@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

- **Children with a child protection plan (CP)** should have a priority childcare place and are considered by the Local Authority to be highly vulnerable. Please notify the Local Authority if parents or carers decide that the child will be safer at home.
- **Looked After Children (LAC)** should have a priority child care place unless the school and the child's carer decide they can be cared for safely at home. Please notify the Local Authority where it is decided that the child will be safer at home.
- **For Children in Need (CIN)** schools should work with families to agree the best option. Please notify the Local Authority where it is decided that the child will be safer at home.
- For children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), Team Around the Child (TAC), Young Carers, disabled children and other children facing social difficulties, schools should work with families to agree the best option on the basis that every child who can be safely cared for at home, should be. Please

inform the child's key worker where it is decided that the child will be safer at home.

### **Attendance**

You will have received the DfE notification yesterday by direct email from the Education Team. This advises that you stop taking your normal attendance register and complete the DfE streamlined register for all children and young people attending educational settings. This can be accessed through your DfE sign in account.

### **School Resilience**

As the impact of the Covid 19 virus progresses, schools will find they need to draw on resources from a wider workforce to their own. For the vast majority of schools, this will not be an issue at the beginning of next week but it will become necessary to draw on an increasingly wide range of options to keep supporting the **vulnerable** and the children of **key workers**.

This will undoubtedly include measures which are alien to normal working practices in schools such as staff rotas, volunteers, support from your community, redeployment of staff in other workforces and the use of shared sites. Schools should begin to think what this might look like and share plans across localities.

Some schools, Teaching Schools and Multi Academy Trusts have already started to think about this and we are considering how the Local Authority can support. We will share some ideas in future communications.

Only once schools in a locality have exhausted **all possible options** for providing childcare to vulnerable children and the children of critical workers, will it become necessary to prioritise within those groups until capacity recovers. The DfE are considering what this may mean but it is not expected that local areas will need to do that now.

Once again, I would like to express my gratitude for the way in which school leaders and your teams have responded in what was a very challenging week for everybody.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "H. Sandy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Heather Sandy  
Executive Director for Children's Services  
Lincolnshire County Council