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Specialist Safeguarding
Consultant, Andrew Hall



Safeguarding Briefing - 16th March 2020

Dear Colleague,

I hope that you are coping during these unprecedented times. The situation is really fluid isn't it, and there is no sense of certainty. I think it is incredible hard for schools to do the 'right' thing; government, the general public and parents don't always understand the tension between all the different pressures that have to be taken into account. Added to this is that there is a lot of anxiety around, and this is being felt by the children.

As I write this, government advice to schools in England is not to close, but if that changes, it will certainly bring many more challenges. I imagine that you have already given a lot of thought to the impact on our more vulnerable children and families, but here I've added my thoughts.

Remember these are unusual times, and whilst we may strive to keep on with the teaching and learning, actually looking after the children, our own friends and families, and each other may be more important than getting the learning packs ready, or setting up remote webcam learning.

I have been reminded of the sometimes loneliness of the headteacher role, so please look after your Head. If you are a new head, or an acting head, do seek out support from more experienced heads; if you're a more experienced head, do give less experienced heads a call and see how they are.

If you are struggling to cope or just need to chat, remember that the [Education Support Partnership](#) helpline is available for anyone who works in a school.

Education Support Partnership Helpline: **08000 562 561**

Download a poster about the partnership here:

https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/helpline_poster.pdf

Remote teaching and learning policy - safeguarding perspective

Some schools may be ready to use technology to provide remote teaching and learning. Many will not, and personally I don't think this is the time to stress test your tech or try out a new e-teaching approach.

Although, I'm a bit of a geek, I know little of the tech available to schools, so I can't comment on that. However, I think there are a few things to think about from a safeguarding perspective.

Although some teachers may well be super keen to set up online learning using webcams and groups of children on the screen, as far as my tech knowledge takes me, I think that might be a step too far in complexity. Better would be a webinar. The difference for me is that the teacher is on screen and does the talking whilst 'broadcasting' the lesson to the children. In my understanding of a webinar, the teacher doesn't see the children, and the children can't see each other. Recorded videos might be better than live webcams. Personally, I think that if your school has never considered live webcams and class groups, now's probably not the right time to start.

Live Webcams in teaching and learning - safeguarding issues to consider

- No 1:1s, groups only
- Staff and children must wear suitable clothing, as should anyone else in the household.
- Any computers used should be in appropriate areas, for example, not in bedrooms; and where possible be against a neutral background.
- The live class should be recorded and backed up elsewhere, so that if any issues were to arise, the video can be reviewed.
- Live classes should be kept to a reasonable length of time, or the streaming may prevent the family 'getting on' with their day
- Language must be professional and appropriate, including any family members in the background
- Schools should risk assess the use of live learning using webcams
- Data Controllers need to reassure themselves that any teaching/learning software and/or platforms are suitable and raise no privacy issues; or use cases against the providers terms and conditions (for example, no business use of consumer products)

Other considerations

We also need to remember that not every family is able to afford the required technology and even if they do, there may not be enough to go round the siblings. Families living in poor housing conditions may have no broadband. The gap between the have's and the have-not's will be noticeable with remote learning. It would be useful to consult with parents about what would be most useful and whether 'live' online learning would be welcomed.

It is likely that children will be using the internet more than ever in an enforced school closure or period of self-isolation, so safer internet messages are particularly important.

I think the talk about remote learning also potentially ignores the fact that an unknown number of people, including children, might well be ill in any case. That's what a pandemic is. Parents are likely to have more to worry about than whether their child is ready to sit in front of a computer at the right time.

Children with autism spectrum conditions may well find it difficult to accept that 'school' work should be done at home - they find ordinary homework difficult to accept. Their levels of anxiety will be higher than usual and may lead to more panic attacks or 'melt-downs'.

Further information

Developing Digital Leadership Bulletin - March 2020

<https://seureservercdn.net/198.71.233.227/0ba.288.myftpupload.com/wp->

<content/uploads/2020/02/Developing-Digital-Leadership-Bulletin-CoronaVirus.pdf>

Independent Schools Council Digital Strategy Group has information here:
<https://iscdigital.co.uk/coronavirus-continuing-learning/>

Vulnerable Children

Should schools have to close the impact will perhaps be felt greatest by the most vulnerable children. I think there are probably two key aspects to consider, food and child protection.

Risk assessing individual students

I have always advocated that schools should identify their vulnerable students on the basis of risk. I suggest red, amber and blue. Now's not the time to go into detail, but essentially the 'grades' are:

Red - most risk of harm or neglect and fewest protective factors (would include those with a child protection plan)

Amber - a moderate risk of harm, but with some protective factors (would include those identified as 'Child in Need'; and those with a social worker)

Blue - some concerns escalating or unmet needs; or have been red or amber and need monitoring.

These levels are relative to your school. They are not finite or defined. Each child is only 'graded' in relation to other learners. even in schools with no child protection plans or any children in need, there will still be red, amber and blue pupils. You might also include your SEND learners too.

I suggest that under normal circumstances, 'red' children are discussed every week, 'amber' children fortnightly, and 'blue' children once a month. Of course, they can be moved 'up' or 'down' the gradings in between times if necessary. At the moment, and especially if schools have to close, risk factors will be higher and so may warrant a 'grade' higher than usual.

Schools then need to identify what children at each level are offered, as an 'intervention' or support.

More than ever, in these difficult times, I think it would be useful for schools to look at identifying which children have the greatest vulnerability by prioritising their learners as suggested above. This means that should the school have to close, it can be clear what can be offered in order to continue to fulfil any safeguarding duties according to child need.

All contact or support with vulnerable children and families should be recorded. During school closures, products like [CPOMS](#) and [MyConcern](#) really do come into their own, as they can be securely accessed from anywhere. Remember though that if the screen is visible in non-secure areas, for example, at home, that there can be a data breach, if other members of your family can see it.

The most vulnerable children will potentially need a home visit, so that they can see in person, probably by the DSL. (All usual measures around staff safety to be taken into account.) The frequency of any visit should be related to risk, but probably at least once or twice a week. In cases of self-isolation, aiming to view through a window may be

appropriate. For any children with a social worker, other professionals should be kept informed. This is especially important, since for many children, school is a protective factor and when it is missing, the risk may increase and children's services may need to reassess the case. Staff should attend CP and CIN meetings wherever practical or possible.

Contact phone calls will also be important. Ideally these calls should be made using school phones, rather than personal devices.

For some families, coronavirus may lead to unemployment or redundancy and schools should be alert to the potential stress and loss of income. For these parents, it may be important to understand where to signpost them to get support, including from third-sector organisations.

Although there is talk of schools closing, it isn't clear what that means. It could mean for example, that the children can't come into school, but staff could, as there are fewer of them. In that case, staff could make contacts with families from the school office. If not, schools need to be careful that emergency lists of contact details are GDPR-complaint and that data protection isn't compromised. Data Controllers should risk assess the arrangements.

One important impact will be around food. For some children, a hot school meal is an important part of their day. I know that some schools are looking at how they can support children with the provision of hampers of goods provided through their school caterers. Hampers could be distributed by appointment times, or delivered. Some headteachers are trying to work with the DfE to authorise a system of vouchers that can be 'cashed' in stores, rather than providing a meal.

It is being reported that donations to food banks are decreasing as some people are ensuring that they have 'enough' themselves.

Remember that children at risk of criminal exploitation, including county lines, will be particularly at risk. Not least because drug dealers will need to continue to supply people with addictions. The government are indicating that the police will only deal with life-threatening situations.

COVID-19 Guidance for schools from the government and others

COVID-19: guidance for educational settings (DfE)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>

Coronavirus guidance from Boarding Schools Association

<http://www.boarding.org.uk/media/news/article/13365/Novel-Coronavirus-guidance-update-February-10-2020>

COVID-19: travel guidance for the education sector

Overseas Travel

The government advises against any overseas trips for children under 18 organised by educational settings. This is because trip leaders would face significant challenges in making arrangements to ensure children's welfare, should adult supervisors or children be

required to self-isolate.

Domestic Travel

The DfE is not currently advising against domestic trips (residential and non-residential) for children under 18, however, educational settings should refresh their risk assessments.

More information

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/covid-19-travel-guidance-for-the-education-sector>

FAQs: Coronavirus (Outdoor Education Advisors Panel)

<https://oeapng.info/download/4549/>

DfE Helpline for schools

Staff, parents and young people can contact the helpline as follows:

Phone: 0800 046 8687

Email: DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk

Opening hours: 8am to 6pm (Monday to Friday)

[Click here to forward this email to a colleague](#)

Could you help with this research into compassion, childhood dissatisfaction and self-criticism?

Childhood dissatisfaction has been shown to be associated with mental distress such as anxiety and depression as illustrated in a number of studies.

My son Joseph is a final year undergraduate studying psychology. His final year dissertation will help research in the area of psychological interventions and adverse childhood experience which can affect people across all demographics.

In order to further knowledge into mental health, this study explores whether or not we can use information about childhood and views on the concept of compassion to predict an individual's level of self-criticism. This can then aid healthcare professionals create better interventions for service users.

It would be great if you could help Joe's research by completing four consecutive online questionnaires. Participants, who must be over the age of 18, are allocated a maximum of 30 minutes for completion.

For further information and to take part in the study, please go to:

https://aruspsych.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0w8xoW76TIGtFL7

Get Your Communication Right In These Alarming Times (Michael Dodd Communications)

Michael Dodd is an experienced Australian broadcast journalist and media consultant who has worked in the UK and across the world. Amongst other things, Michael helps frontline United Nations staff prepare to face challenging media questioning during crises in the world's trouble spots.

In his latest blog post, Michael talks about the leadership challenge of communicating information about coronavirus. He says, 'my advice, in line with my guidance on all communication challenges, is to start your planning with your audience members at the centre of your concerns – whether you intend to connect with them face-to-face, on the phone or through the internet. Try to imagine how they're feeling before you compose what you're going to say. Then take care in working on your content, structure and delivery style.'

To read the rest of his useful blog post go here:

<http://www.michaeldoddcommunications.com/get-your-communication-right-in-these-alarmed-times/>

Michael is known to me through the Professional Speakers' Association, and he certainly knows his stuff. Michael's book 'Great Answers To Tough Questions At Work' is an excellent read for anyone, whether preparing for interviews, talking to parents or, indeed, the media. His book will help prepare you for what he calls, 'the blowtorch on the belly questions'. You can find more about his book here:

<http://www.michaeldoddcommunications.com/great-answers-tough-questions-work/>

Forthcoming Courses

At this stage, all my planned events are going ahead. The venues that I use are all taking proactive measures to ensure that there is an upgraded cleaning regime and extra care has been taken in food preparation and service. Our group size is 18 - 20, and my venues are not overly busy. Should things change, I will be aiming to move to a live-streamed online course.

Seminars can be booked online using the links below, by replying to this email stating the course you wish to attend, or by simply phoning Emma or Hollie at our office on 01223 929269.

Advanced Safeguarding for DSLs

BIRMINGHAM Thursday 19th March 2020 [Two places available](#)

LONDON Tuesday 24th March 2020 **FULL**

BIRMINGHAM Thursday 26th March 2020 **FULL**

LONDON Tuesday 21st April 2020 [Two places available](#)

MANCHESTER Wednesday 6th May 2020 [Book Online](#)

BIRMINGHAM Wednesday 3rd June 2020 [Few Places Left](#)

YOUR SCHOOL HERE [Book with Emma](#)

for Advanced Safeguarding for DSLs, Whole School CPD or Conference Presentations

Until next week, stay safe.

Best wishes,

Andrew Hall
Specialist Safeguarding Consultant
www.safeguardingschools.co.uk

Our mailing address is:

Success In Schools Ltd., Blois Business Centre, Blois Road, Steeple Bumpstead, CB9 7BN, United Kingdom

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