**FIRST DAY RESPONSE SYSTEM FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE OPEN TO SOCIAL CARE AND ATTEND EARLY YEARS SETTINGS AND SCHOOLS DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC. (incorporating those children open to early help, those children who are not open to early help or children’s social care and those who have an education, health and care plan))**

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16. **INTRODUCTION**
    1. This guidance is about vulnerable children who need to be in school and how we work with partners to ensure they attend and/or are safeguarded. Incorporated into this guidance are those children who are supported through early help and those who are vulnerable and not supported by any lead professional. Children supported by education, health and care plans will also be discussed.
    2. During COVID 19 we have had to change the way we work with families. There is an expectation of the Government which is shared by Sefton Council that vulnerable children will continue to attend an education and early years setting, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at severe risk.
    3. During the COVID 19 Pandemic when schools and early years settings are open there is even more need to have eyes on vulnerable children and young people and, where they do not attend that schools, early years settings, and Sefton Council work together with others to address concerns and encourage attendance at school and Early Years settings.
    4. We want children to experience as normal a childhood as possible and continue to learn and be stimulated during this unprecedented period. School for many, is a safe place that offers care and support beyond education. It also safeguards children who may be living in environments where they witness domestic violence and/or abuse. It is therefore important that children wherever possible, who have a social worker should attend an early year’s settings, school and education setting.
    5. Maintaining good safeguarding practice and ensuring that any safeguarding concerns or allegations continue to be responded to promptly and appropriately during the pandemic is vital. When working in partnership with one another to support this group of vulnerable children, the early years settings, schools and Sefton Local Authority have taken steps to ensure that clear safeguarding arrangements and protocols remain in place between them and are consistent with any adapted practice.
    6. This guidance sets out expectations on Children Social Care, First day Response Attendance Team, Virtual School, Early Years Settings and Schools to convey high expectations for ensuring attendance is a priority. The first day response system will strengthen the safeguarding arrangements for those children who are not attending School or an Early Years Setting.
    7. Sefton Children’s Services have come together to define a process that ensure that children with a social worker eligible to attend school are seen by at least one professional every week during the national lockdown. This is building on the current process that has been in place since the wider opening of schools.
    8. If children have an Early Help plan the schools need to work closely with the named early help worker for the school if they have concerns about the child.
    9. Schools can also use the Attendance/Welfare referral form if they are concerned about children who are not open to early help or children’s social care.
    10. It has been agreed that social workers in Sefton will complete all statutory face to face visits **(please refer to CSC Covid Guidance V.7 about statutory visits**). However, if the child is not in school then they will need to be seen on a regular basis by a professional.
17. **VULNERABLE CHILDRENS ATTENDANCE GROUP**

2.1 A group was established in March 2020 looking at the education of vulnerable children. They have met on a regular basis. The first day response system will be discussed at this meeting to see how it is progressing and to address any barriers that are preventing the system from being effective.

2.2 **Membership of the Group include: -**

* Tracy McKeating – School Attendance Lead
* Julie Bucknall – Service Manager, Children’s Social Care
* Mary Palin – Headteacher Virtual School
* Linda McQueen – Lead Early Years
* Olivia Rawcliffe – Children’s Social Care Administrator

1. **MONITORING ATTENDANCE OF THOSE CHILDREN WHO ARE REGISTERED AT EARLY YEARS SETTINGS**

3.1 From January 2021 Early Years Settings must report those children who are absent from the setting who are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked after child.

* 1. A process has been put into place that explains how Early Years Settings will operate the first day response system. **(See appendix one)**
  2. It is essential that Children’s regular and sustained attendance is promoted at an early year setting or school in order for them to access their free entitlement, which is essential if they are to make progress and achieve expected outcomes.
  3. Sefton Local Authority and Sefton Early Years Providers embrace their role in promoting the benefits of regular attendance for young children with their parents and carers.
  4. Sefton Early Years Providers are advised to monitor children’s attendance as a part of their safeguarding practice
  5. Early Years in Sefton:
* Deliver high quality education and care underpinned by the secure routines and attachments that are necessary to support children’s development as independent, resilient and capable learners.
* Are committed to supporting children’s parents and carers to understand the positive impact that punctuality and attendance has throughout life.

3.7 In a small minority of cases, poor attendance could be an indicator of more serious concerns for a child or family. Therefore, monitoring attendance may be crucial in keeping a child or other family members safe from harm.

1. **HOW CAN EARLY YEARS SETTINGS AND EDUCATION SETTINGS PROMOTE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE DURING THE PANDEMIC?**

* Reassure parents about what COVID 19 secure measures have been put into place.
* Recognise that children attending an early year’s settings is an important protective factor for children receiving support from a social worker.
* Ensure all contact details are updated regularly, preferably two that include one out of the household.
* All staff need to be clear about reporting safeguarding concerns including where absence is a cause for concern, or the family withdraw the child from the setting.
* Be clear on the expectations on how a parent should report a child’s absence, with a specific time to contact prior to each session. If the parent does not make the call, then the setting needs to follow up the absence.
* Follow EYFS Statutory Guidance by keeping accurate records of the daily times of arrival and departure for each child. This should list the steps taken from the initial day of absence, including how this is recorded and if any concerns are raised. **This would include reporting any absences to social workers.**
* A designated person who will oversee the attendance at the setting.
* Using positive strategies to increase attendance on an individual basis.
* Regular conversations with parents/carers about the importance of good attendance.
* Ensure that key information can be translated in languages that support those children in your care.
* Be flexible regarding session times to support those families who may find particular days difficult, e.g. regular hospital appointments, shift patterns of parents, new baby in the family.
* Contact Early Help/undertake an Early Help Assessment, concerns around attendance are indicative of other vulnerabilities within the family. (If there is no social worker involved).
* Provide clear information on the benefits of accessing and attending the funded places, including how children develop and highlight the impact on how low or inconsistent attendance can hinder children’s development, particularly in the transition period to supporting children to settle.

**5. CHILDREN AGE 0 TO 4 SUPPORTED BY A SOCIAL WORKER WHO DO NOT ATTEND AN EARLY YEARS SETTING**

5.1 The Local Authority will be encouraging parents/carers to enrol their children at an Early Years Setting as they are entitled to access this free of charge through the two year offer.

5.2 We do recognise that parents who have children age 0 to 4 may not access a free child care place at a setting.

* 1. A meeting takes place daily to discuss children who are 0 to 4 who do not attend a setting. These children are seen weekly by a professional. (**see appendix two)**

**6. MONITORING ATTENDANCE OF THOSE CHILDREN WHO HAVE A SOCIAL WORKER WHO ARE ON THE ROLL OF A SCHOOL OR AN EDUCATION SETTING**

6.1Children who have an allocated social worker are expected to attend school or an education setting full time. It is essential that all social workers and schools convey to parents that their children are eligible and are expected to access their school place during the pandemic.

6.2From January 2021, schools and education settings are reporting those children who are absent from the setting who are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child.

6.3 A process has been put into place that explains how schools and education settings will operate the first day response system. **(See appendix 3)**

6.4 When a child needs to self-isolate for whatever reason, Sefton schools and the Local Authority will prioritise support, including increasing home visits.

**7. CHILDREN OPEN TO EARLY HELP**

7.1 Schools and settings together with Early Help Workers will monitor those children who are not attending school.

7.2 If the school or the early help worker become concerned about any children, they will follow Sefton Child protection and safeguarding procedures.

**8.** **VULNERABLE CHLDREN IDENTIFIED BY SCHOOLS AND SETTINGS WHO** **ARE NOT OPEN TO EARLY HELP OR CHILDRENS SOCIAL CARE.**

8.1 If schools and settings are finding it difficult to make contact with vulnerable pupils they should complete the form and return it to [Christopher.keane@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:Christopher.keane@sefton.gov.uk)

8.2 Schools and settings in Sefton have systems in place to safeguard children who are vulnerable. If they become concerned and there are safeguarding issues, they need to follow their child protection and safeguarding procedures.

**9.** **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE AN EDUCATION, HEALTH AND CARE PLAN WITHOUT A SOCIAL WORKER OR EARLY HELP**

9.1 Schools should submit daily on the first day response form those children who are absent from school who have an Education, health and care plan are not attending.

9.2 Sefton have designated early help worker for EHCPs. They will look at those children in mainstream schools as well as those in specialist provision.

9.3 If the school request a home visit the designated early help worker will have a conversation with the school prior to any home visits taking place. They will speak to the family, assess the situation and a home visit will be undertaken.

1. **WHAT CAN SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION SETTINGS DO TO SUPPORT GOOD ATTENDANCE DURING THE PANDEMIC?**

* If Children are eligible to attend reassure parents/carers what COVID 19 secure measures are in place.
* Ensure they have all up-to-date contact numbers for the family, including one outside of the household.
* Participate in Sefton’s first day response system by submitting the form daily.
* Follow up with parents/carers if a child is expected to attend and does not, and then liaise with social workers accordingly.
* Recognise education settings are an important protective factor for children receiving support from a social worker.
* Where children and young people are absent from school during the pandemic, ensure they receive their free school meal entitlement.
* Ensure children and young people have access to a digital device to engage in remote learning in order to make progress.
* Undertake door step welfare visits when children are absent to ensure they are seen safe and well.
* Ensure children are provided with the necessary support to prevent them from becoming drawn into harmful and potentially criminal activities which is a real concern, especially for older children.
* **Use the attendance codes as set out by the DfE Guidance. This states that children with a social worker** should not be marked as Code X if they are not in school (except if they are shielding, self-isolating or quarantining). If the parent of a vulnerable child wishes their child to be absent, the parent should let the school know. The Department expects schools to grant applications for leave of absence given the exceptional circumstances. This should be recorded as code **C** (leave of absence authorised by the school) unless another authorised absence code is more applicable.

**APPENDIX ONE**

1. Non- attendance noted by Early Years Provider. Social Worker informed of absence by the setting.

Provider makes contact with family per setting policy to ascertain reasons for absence.

2. Early Years provider completes 1st day Response Form and submits it to the LA Early Years. Contains Attendance email address by 10:30 a.m. each day. [EarlyYearsAttendance@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:EarlyYearsAttendance@sefton.gov.uk)

3. Attendance meeting held discuss and assess any concerns and if an attendance welfare visit is required by the local authority

4. Where PVI Nursery / Childminder closed due to COVID, Q10 will inform 1st Responder and an attendance welfare visit will take place each week during nursery closure

5. Liquid logic and other systems updated. Feedback to Early Years Setting

**APPENDIX TWO - First Day Response System for Children 0- 4years who do not attend any educational settings and have a Social Worker**

1. The first day response team will undertake a welfare visit to check on the family circumstances and

ensure families have the right support to meet the needs of their children and keep them safe during the national lockdown. If during these visits any unmet need or safeguarding concerns is identified, this will be fed back to the allocated social worker who will follow up on the concerns raised.

1. A daily meeting will be completed on MS Teams meetings with family support workers who are completing

visits and give them the list of children that require a visit for that day.

1. Targeted Areas

Children 0-4 years who do not attend any educational settings

Families will receive a visit once every four weeks by allocated Social worker and once per week by identified

support worker.

All visits will be recorded on LCS, on the case note type COVID 19 Welfare attendance visits.

1. **Vulnerable Children’s Attendance Group**

First day response Leads:

Tracy McKeating – School Attendance Lead

Julie Bucknall – Service Manger Children’s Social Care

Mary Palin – Head teacher Virtual School

Linda McQueen – Lead Early Years First Day Response

1. Regular meetings will take place to discuss how the system is progressing and to address any

barriers. These meetings will take place every Wednesday and Friday to monitor the effectiveness

of the programme.

**APPENDIX** **THREE**

1. School to complete First Day Response Form (V6) daily for all absent children who ;

* are open to Social Care (LAC, CP, CIN or undergoing a C&F Assessment)

**OR**

* have an Education Health Care Plan ( **School guidance for completing First Day Response (V6) form below)**

1. FDR Attendance staff hold Triage mtg at 11 a.m. daily to look at forms and allocate home visit requests.

EHCP requests to be reviewed by Tracy McKeating

1. FDR home visit completed that day where possible. Visit to address following areas;

* Has the child been seen?
* Child is eligible to attend school and should be encouraged to take up.
* Barriers to attending to be explored if school place is refused.
* Access to home learning. To include IT and internet access
* Any additional support requirements i.e. food hampers and gas / electricity payment.

1. **FDR Attendance Team**

Visit to be input onto LCS and email feedback to school, Social Worker and Team Manager.

**School guidance for completing First Day Response (V6) form**

* School must ensure that all fields are completed in full within the form.
* Children open to social care who are not attending school should be seen each week and school should clearly indicate if a home visit is needed by the Attendance Team?
* Where a family are presenting with Covid symptoms or have a positive Covid test result, these should be clearly indicated on the form to be reviewed by Tracy McKeating.
* Form to be sent via email to [tracy.mckeating@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:tracy.mckeating@sefton.gov.uk) and [stephanie.barnes@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:stephanie.barnes@sefton.gov.uk) by 10:30 a.m. each day for triage.

**APPENDIX FOUR**

**FIRST DAY RESPONSE FORM (V6)**

**FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN OPEN TO SOCIAL CARE (LAC, CP, CIN or undergoing C+F ASSESSMENT) OR ON AN EHCP**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name of School :** | **Date :** |
| **Name of person completing form and contact number :** |  |
| **Email address of person(s) who should receive feedback :** |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name of child / Young person** | **DOB** | **Parent/Carer**  **Name** | **Home address**  **AND**  **contact number** | **Type of Plan**  **LAC**  **CP**  **CIN**  **C+F Asst EHCP** | **Name of Social Worker**  **AND**  **contact number** | **Reason for absence/**  **comments** | **Does the family have Covid symptoms OR**  **had a positive Covid Test result? (Yes/No)** | **Confirm how SW has been informed of absence**  **(Email /TC)** | **DAY and DATE CHILD LAST SEEN**  **IN PERSON**  **AND BY WHOM**  **School, SW, Attendance Team, etc** | **Confirm if a home visit needs to be undertaken by the Attendance Team today**  **(Yes / No)** |
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**NB: All First Day Response absence returns must be emailed back by 10.30am to:**

**Steph Barnes (**[**stephanie.barnes@sefton.gov.uk**](mailto:stephanie.barnes@sefton.gov.uk)**) and Tracy McKeating** [**tracy.mckeating@sefton.gov.uk**](mailto:tracy.mckeating@sefton.gov.uk)**)**

**APPENDIX FIVE**

**Referral for intervention from the School Attendance Team. (children not on a plan)**

Please return application form to: Christopher Keane at [christopher.keane@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:christopher.keane@sefton.gov.uk)

**In most cases this referral form should only be completed if the school has undertaken attendance intervention.**

|  |
| --- |
| **A. Pupil & School Details** |

Name of Pupil:

Date of Birth:

**DD / MM / YYYY**

Home Address including telephone and email contacts

Tel No: Email:

Parents / Carers name/s:

Current School:

Year Group:

Gender:

**M** **/ F**

Name of referrer and Tel No:

|  |
| --- |
| **B. Supporting Information** |

What actions has school taken

Please outline why a home visit is requested:

**C. Outside Agency Interventions (to date)**

What interventions have been implemented **by external agencies** to support this child?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Agency | Date of Involvement | Action taken/Outcome |
| SWACA |  |  |
| SENIS Educational |  |  |
| SENIS Inclusion Consultant |  |  |
| Community Consultant Paediatrician |  |  |
| CAMHS |  |  |
| Speech & Language Therapy |  |  |
| Occupational Therapy and/or Physiotherapy |  |  |
| Other (please specify) |  |  |

Referrers Signature: Date:

**DD / MM / YYYY**