



Knowsley Safeguarding Children Partnership Newsletter – April 2020

Introduction

This newsletter has been developed to provide a snapshot of the support in place to safeguard and protect children in Knowsley.

Message from the Independent Chair – Audrey Williamson:

As the country approaches a further extension to the present period of 'lockdown', I wanted to write to you offering my sincere thanks for your professionalism and commitment to safeguard and protect the children of Knowsley during these extraordinary times. commitment to safeguard and protect the children of Knowsley during these extraordinary times.

The challenges that you have faced are of a kind that we have not previously seen or hopefully never likely to see again in our lifetimes.

The current 'lockdown', requiring us all to stay at home, has brought into sharp focus the risks to vulnerable children and our role in safeguarding and protecting them.

It is anticipated that there is likely to be an increase in cases of domestic abuse, particularly during periods of self-isolation. The National Domestic Abuse helpline has reported a 25% increase in calls since the lockdown was imposed. Nearly ¾ million people have applied for universal credit since the lockdown began.

Universal credit is a consolidated monthly payment, which replaced a range of previous benefits such as jobseekers allowance, housing benefit, child tax credit, and working tax credit.

The significant financial hardship that some families may face during these times, may lead to increases in cases of neglect and domestic abuse.

There has been early evidence of an increased demand within the online child sexual abuse and exploitation domain, with children spending more time

In addition, there are concerns that there may be an increase in intra-familial contact child sexual abuse, especially given that vulnerable children will be isolated at home with potential offenders

These are worrying times for all of us and it is important that we do not lose sight of the impact that these events may have on the mental health and well-being of children through increased isolation, loneliness and neglect.

In these unprecedented times, practitioners and our communities are reminded of the need to be extra vigilant to the safeguarding needs of children. If you or one of your colleagues is worried about a child, they should follow our current safeguarding procedures.

By working together, we can safeguard and protect children in Knowsley.

The Knowsley response

Helping Children Thrive in Knowsley – Practitioners are reminded of the Helping Children Thrive in Knowsley document, which replaces Knowsley's Threshold of Need Guidance 2018. This document was developed setting out our approach to keeping children in Knowsley safe and protecting them from harm. It provides guidance for;

- *Practitioners who are in contact with children and families who have a concern about a child and want to know how they should help them.*
- *All children's service providers to provide clarity on areas of need to enable them to be consistent in how they support children who are referred to them.*
- *Anyone who has concerns about a child. It is intended to help practitioners embed the Signs of Safety framework into their practice, looking at how practitioners in the first instance can offer help and encouragement to families to find their own solutions and to offer help and support when needed.*

It is designed to ensure that practitioners consider that the right help is given to the children at the right time and for the right duration.

<https://www.knowsleyscp.org.uk/helping-children-thrive-document/>

Early Help Support Hub - .Introduced on Monday 13th April 2020, the Early Help Support Hub enables us to support those families who are outside the 'shielded' groups, but who experience a range of social and financial vulnerabilities.

This includes families in temporary accommodation, care leavers, young carers, resettlement families, families with children who have an Education, Health and Care Plan, families who are facing financial hardships because of Covid-19, and families who are in poverty and have a range of difficulties. Families are telephone supported from experienced Early Help staff who will support families with brief interventions, advice and guidance covering a range of issues such as parenting advice, stress management, routines and emotional support.

In addition, if families require further support they will be offered additional parenting support with specialist Parenting Workers, practical support (food deliveries) and telephone support offered to children and young people so that they can talk to someone outside of their family.

This will offer our statutory services, a real safety net for families we are worried about, and gives professionals who need advice and families themselves somewhere to seek support.

Domestic abuse - To date, Knowsley has not seen an increase in domestic abuse contacts however; we have taken proactive steps to communicate key messages on social media about online safety and domestic abuse. We will continue to cascade these messages. Work is also underway with domestic abuse charities and helplines to ensure that appropriate referrals are being made;

Merseyside Police are coordinating a domestic abuse campaign in order to highlight the support mechanisms available to victims across Merseyside, offer reassurance that this support is still available during this unprecedented period and enable self-referrals to services which, since the Coronavirus self-isolation measures, have reduced.

The campaign will also seek to raise awareness of frontline police officers, as well as our partners of their roles and responsibilities as one of the few agencies to have contact with a victim.

Education - Over the last week there has been progress made in monitoring vulnerable children in and out of education. The overall numbers of children attending emergency childcare in schools remains low –this includes for vulnerable children and other councils are reporting similar numbers.

The partnership would like to extend our thanks to all teaching staff who worked over Easter and the bank holidays to keep schools open.

Children not in school have benefited from a number of innovative ways of keeping in touch. Staff have highlighted, that, in some circumstances a number of children have benefited from these forms of communication and appears to have achieved some more openness in some situations.

As a partnership, we are keen to learn from the impact of this innovation and build on it for the future.

E learning – While it has been necessary to postpone ‘face to face’ training we are committed to providing you with the skills and knowledge to support you in your roles. There are a range of e-learning courses that you can still access, through the training portal on the partnership website; <https://kscbtraining.knowsley.gov.uk>

Wellbeing - We want our frontline services to be safe and supported as they continue to safeguard and protect children Knowsley. The lockdown restrictions can have an impact on the wellbeing and mental health of people.

Agencies have put in place a range of mechanisms aimed at supporting our colleagues.

The NHS have posted advice on their website that you may find helpful “Supporting our people - Helping you manage your own health and wellbeing whilst looking after others. <https://people.nhs.uk/>

Merseyside Police Federation have posted wellbeing advice on their website, under the heading ‘Oscar Kilo’ <https://oscarkilo.org.uk/category/covid-19-coronavirus-hub/>

Knowsley Council have posted well being advice on their intranet site ‘Bertha’ the advice can be accessed on the ‘new normal’ page

<http://sharepoint.knowsley.gov.uk/sites/bertha/your-job/Documents/THE-NEW-NORMAL-BOOKLET.pdf>

Voice Of The Child – Knowsley Youth Mutual (KYM) have continued to engage with children in our communities during this Covid19 pandemic.

KYM's current offer is predominantly virtual, resource packs of activities have been delivered to the homes of our more vulnerable families, with a number of one to one sessions taking place over the telephone with those individuals who do not have access to the internet.

Some concerns raised by children include;

- *Young people struggling with change or lack of routine -*
- *School - Exam results, not being able to get support with work or some work being left in school so unable to continue, deadline dates changed.*
- *Mental health - young people struggling with isolation and anxiety, worried about family.*
- *The unknown - fake news and negativity*
- *Food and finances (We have made a number of referrals to food banks and community food banks)*
- *Young people who don't want to take part in video calls, phone calls or respond to messages -*
- *Keeping on top of support information - food bank location/time/rules changing etc helpline numbers - are they current?*
- *What will be the impact on young people once things return to normal - will there be support services in place for counselling / bereavement?*

Further details of KYM's engagement are attached.



Knowsley%20Youth%
20Mutual%20COVID%

NSPCC support to children - The NSPCC has posted advice and support for parents and carers of children who may be anxiety due to COVID 19. It provides advice and tips on a range of issues, including talking to children about their concerns, working from home with children, children, and spotting signs of abuse during this period of isolation. <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/coronavirus-advice-support-children-families-parents/>.