COVID 19 Vulnerable groups report 1

How Ealing schools are working to try to overcome the challenges facing vulnerable groups of pupils during the C19 pandemic

Interim report compiled by the Safeguarding and Wellbeing recovery committee reporting to Schools' C19 Recovery Board

11 June 2020

Executive summary

This paper provides an overview of the various challenges COVID-19 is presenting education providers in Ealing, as well as analysing how schools are trying to overcome these issues to support vulnerable children and young people in their settings. This has led to recommendations for schools and the local authority, based on shared effective practice.

The proportion of vulnerable children attending all Ealing state schools on the 9th June was **16%, this has been on an increasing trend, and in line with England averages.** Attendance in Ealing secondary schools is below national averages.

The Ealing Learning Partnership has identified the following three key vulnerabilities that impact upon children in Ealing:

- High prevalence of children living in crowded households with the associated challenge of poor internet access and poverty and a lack of outside space;
- High levels of domestic violence;
- Increasing risks associated with boredom and isolation especially youth violence and sexual exploitation.

Some communities and groups have faced particularly challenging circumstances during the pandemic, these are explored further in the report.

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Key challenges and how schools are responding

This section of the report highlights the various challenges faced by schools within the borough during the pandemic. Examples of practice that has worked well for schools is shared in green boxes throughout the main body of the report.

The attendance of children to school who were previously identified by social care as being vulnerable remains low. The level of attendance in secondary schools is particularly worrying. Schools are responding by encouraging attendance to weekly 'hub days' as well as running carers clubs. Most schools are asking SENDCOs, DSLs and Tutors to telephone all students who are identified as being vulnerable on a weekly basis. Some schools are also encouraging parents to use the school setting as respite care, as well as publishing videos and literature to reassure parents/carers and children about how the risks of Covid-19 transmission are being managed.

It is particularly challenging for schools to identify new vulnerabilities in the family, as they are not working with children face to face in the school setting. This is also leading to fewer referrals being made by education providers to social care. Many schools are asking Tutors or external specialists (such as Speech and Language Therapists) to make welfare calls to all pupils. In addition, schools are using parent/ carer and pupil surveys to identify newly developing family vulnerabilities.

A minority of children are unable to access online education and welfare support due to a lack of connectivity and ICT resource at home. Some schools have been photocopying and posting resources home, as well as making more regular telephone calls.

Schools have been implementing a range of innovative practices to respond to the increasing strain and anxiety children are experiencing due to the pandemic. These include, developing recovery PSHE resources, offering online counselling services and communicating wellbeing tips to parents/ carers in newsletters.

School leaders are concerned that the generalised anxiety associated with the pandemic will affect staff wellbeing. Many schools are responding by asking staff to take wellbeing surveys to identify any issues. Some schools are holding social events and competitions to improve morale and socialisation, as well as holding wellbeing meetings between staff and HR upon return to the setting.

Some Designated Safeguarding Leads and Inclusion Leaders have been unable to attend network groups due to competing time challenges. These leaders will not have benefitted from the sharing of practice that Ealing schools are identifying as working well.

Schools are facing unique challenges in relation to managing Year 6 to Year 7 transition, and other key transition points, including for those pupils due to complete Year 11 or 13 and have not secured a progression opportunity. Schools are responding by holding transition meetings online for those moving to Year 7, as well as recording virtual tours. Many secondary schools are offering a chance for vulnerable learners and those with education, health and care (EHC) plans to visit the school in person. Some schools are using careers staff to track the anticipated destinations of Year 11 and 13 leavers.

Areas to Develop and Recommendations for Schools

Each school should strive to have regular face-to-face contact with all vulnerable children and strive to increase contact before the end of the summer term.

Some schools are unclear about the steps they should take if they suspect children are missing or not engaging in education. This is particularly important where schools are unable to contact families. Schools should follow the flow chart in Appendix 1.

It is recommended that Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools, who have been unable to attend network groups during the pandemic, receive a telephone call from a representative from the Ealing Learning Partnership. The lines of enquiry for these telephone calls are included in Appendix 2.

Schools should be in frequent contact with vulnerable children and their families to improve attendance. This could be via the telephone or online through software such as SchoolDoJo or online classrooms for older pupils. Schools should consider running 'hub days' and offering the school for use as family respite care to improve attendance.

Areas to Develop and Recommendations for the Local Authority

Many schools are developing useful resources, letters or policies. However, they are not always able to share this effective practice with other schools in the borough. Ealing Learning Partnership should investigate the feasibility of developing a 'knowledge Hub' using existing technology to facilitate the two-way sharing and uploading of information for Designated Safeguarding Leads and Inclusion Leaders.

It is expected that there will be a surge in child protection referrals as children go back to school. It is recommended that the local authority explore the feasibility of posting a Deputy Team Manager (DTM) to the Ealing Children's Integrated Response service as an advisor to schools.

Schools are keen that safeguarding information about Year 6 pupils is transferred to the new secondary school. It is recommended that social workers communicate with both the primary and transfer secondary school over the summer term and holiday period.

Section 1: Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the various challenges COVID-19 is presenting education providers in Ealing, as well as an analysis of how schools are trying to overcome these issues to support vulnerable children and young people in their settings. Examples and evidence have been collated through several established network groups and discussions with school staff responsible for safeguarding and inclusion. This report culminates in a set of recommendations in terms of how schools and Ealing can work together to boost support for vulnerable learners. It is hoped that these recommendations help to improve the attendance of vulnerable children.

1.1 Terms of reference

- Analysis of the current picture in Ealing, including a comparative analysis of attendance rates and identification of vulnerabilities specific to the borough;
- Analysis of effective practice in terms of what is working well for Ealing schools and education settings;
- Analysis of areas requiring more focus;
- Recommendations signposted to specific support

Section 2: Analysis of the current picture in Ealing including a comparative analysis of attendance rates

The Department for Education (2020) defines vulnerable children as those 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".

It also suggests that schools should risk assess learners who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan and identify whether their needs can be "as safely or more safely met in the educational environment".

The DfE also suggests that those "assessed as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services), and who could therefore benefit from continued attendance" should continue to attend settings.

2.1 Local context

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the education of all children. The Children's Commissioner (2020) argues that "there are some children who are facing particular hardship. These children have been cut off from many of the sources of support that they might previously have had – schools, children's centres, health visitors, networks of family and friends, home visits from social workers at the same time as their families are under new stress and strain from lockdown requirements". In response, the Children's Commissioner1 has developed local area profiles, to aid Local Authorities with highlighting groups who are at an elevated level of risk.

This profile data, along with the Ealing Parent Survey (2020) has enabled the local authority to identify the following main vulnerabilities:

- High prevalence of children living in crowded households with the associated challenge of poor internet access, poverty and a lack of outside space;
- High levels of domestic violence;
- Increasing risks associated with boredom and isolation, especially youth violence and sexual exploitation.

[1] https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/were-all-in-this-together/

The Somali community in Ealing is one example of a community that has faced challenges during the pandemic. The Ealing Learning Partnership has been working directly with the Somali Advice and Development Centre, who have highlighted the following impacts on the Somali community:

- High and disproportionate number of deaths from coronavirus, factors include multigenerational households and exposure through public-facing jobs;
- Very poor mental health as a result of the lockdown and widespread loss of jobs;
- Difficulty of pupils' access to home learning provision;
- Language barriers and misconceptions about C19 – elderly afraid/refusing to go to hospital for treatment because they fear dying alone;
- Ramadan impact – Muslims cannot attend mosques to pray or link up with community;
- Rising domestic conflict.

The Ealing Learning Partnership convened a dedicated committee and networks for schools to prioritise the needs of vulnerable children in the borough during the pandemic. These groups are also working together to support in the post-pandemic recovery.

Safeguarding and wellbeing committee recovery sub-group	Chair Julie Lewis
Secondary leaders' inclusion and behaviour network	Chair Bridie McDonagh
Designated safeguarding leads network	Chair Karen Gibson, Sinead Galbraith
Social care and education forum	Chair Karen Gibson and John Churchill
Secondary careers leaders' network	Chair Deborah Dent
Post 16 Leadership Network	Chair Deborah Dent

2.2 Attendance

On 4h June 2020 the government estimated that around **15%** of children classed as "vulnerable" were attending school in England, this was an increase from **12%** at the end of May (DFE, 2020). The proportion of vulnerable children attending Ealing schools on the 9th June was **16%.** It is not possible at this stage to make comparisons with statistical neighbours or areas with similar income deprivation bands, so the figure should be viewed with caution.

Attendance rates in Ealing have been on an upward trend since the beginning of the pandemic, increasing from **7.3%** on the 23rd March to **15.5%** on 9th June *(see Fig 1).*

Overall attendance rates for vulnerable children in Ealing are broadly in line with national average rates of attendance for vulnerable pupils, although attendance in secondary schools is below national averages. There is a significant difference between the attendance rates of vulnerable children in primary and secondary schools. On the 9th June 2020, attendance of vulnerable children was **7.6%** higher in Ealing primary schools compared with secondary providers.

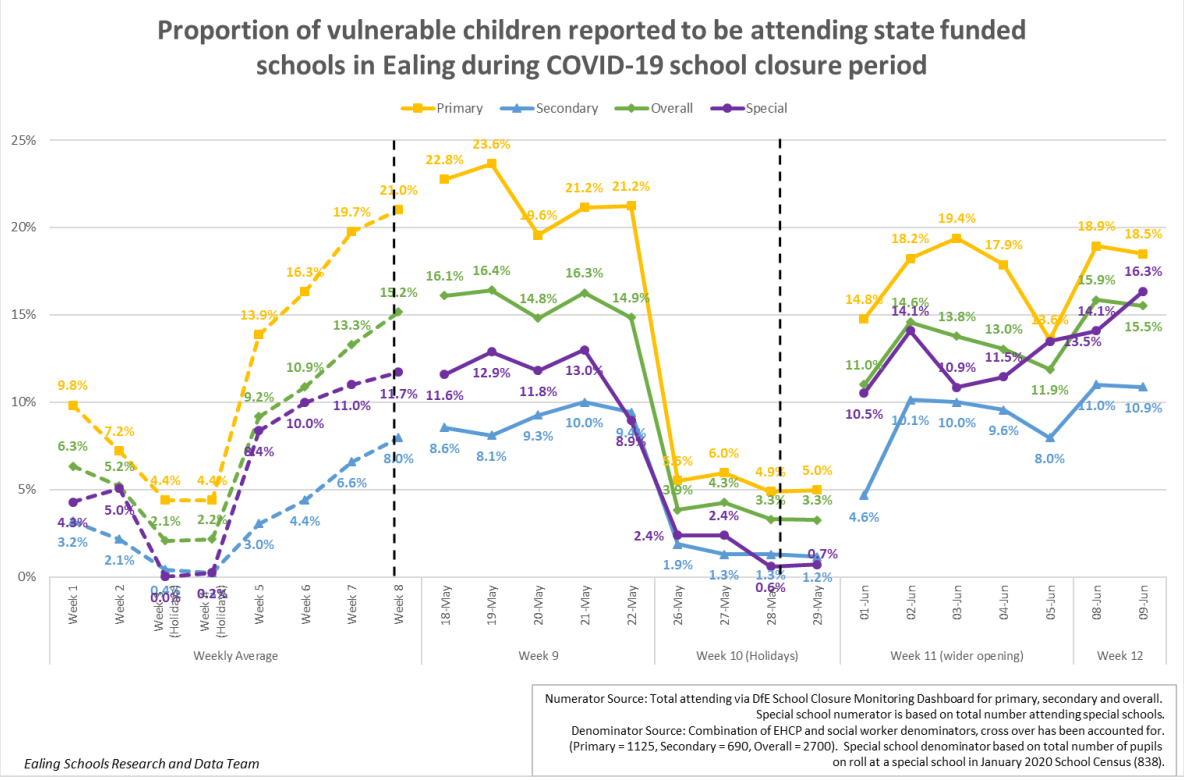
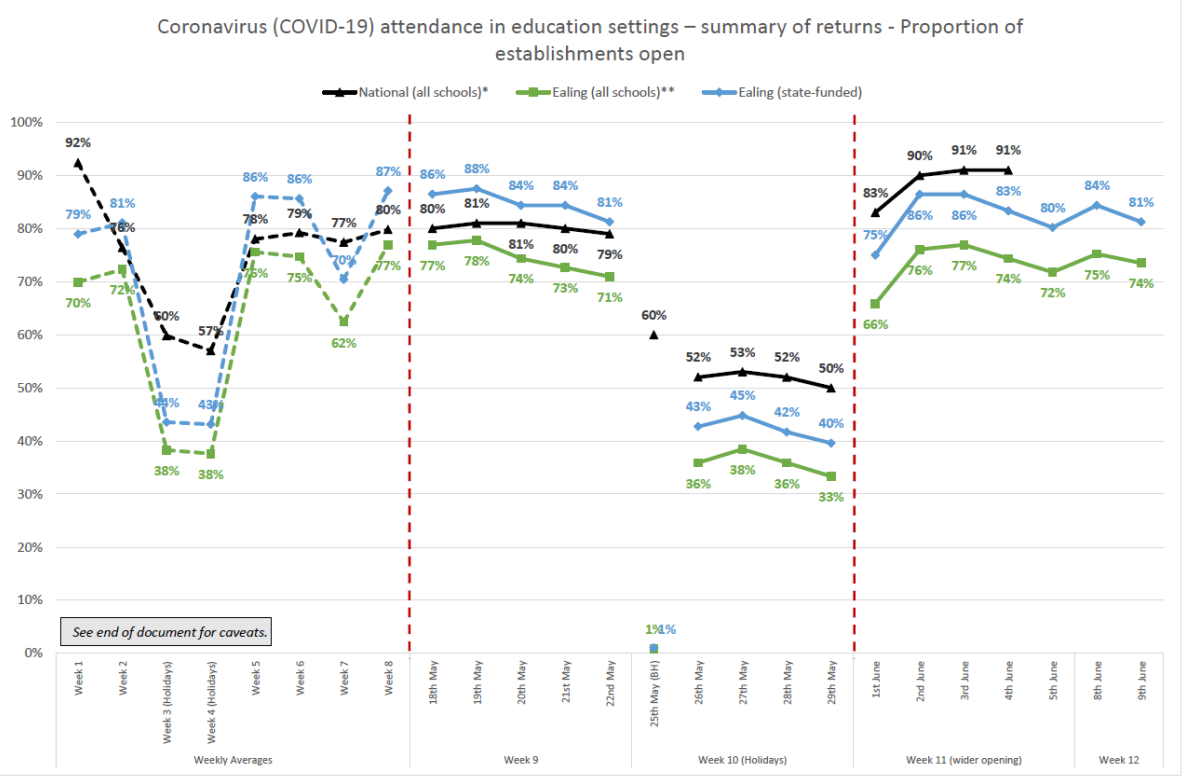


Fig 1: Proportion of vulnerable children reported to be attending state funded schools in Ealing during COVID-19 school closure period

2.3 Proportion of open establishments

As of 9th June 2020, **81%** of state-funded schools in Ealing were open. This is below to the National figure of 91% on 4th June. *Fig 2* shows that the proportion of state-funded school open in Ealing has been consistently above **80%** throughout the crisis.



Ealing Schools Research and Data Team

Source: DfE Coronavirus (COVID-19): attendance in education and early years settings Summary - published 10th June 2020

Fig 2: Proportion of establishments open (COVID-19)

Section 3: Analysis of shared practice that is working well in Ealing schools and education settings

This section of the report identifies a range of challenges that schools have been encountering during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each challenge is followed by examples of practice that Ealing schools have identified as effective through established network groups, including the Designated Safeguarding Leads group and Secondary Inclusion Leads group.

3.1 Attendance

The attendance of children to school who were previously identified by social care as being vulnerable remains low. Research by Ealing in the qualitative parent survey (2020) suggests that low attendance may be due to parental anxieties about COVID-19 infection.

People were also concerned about the risks of COVID-19 in the context of:

- Vulnerable relatives living in the same household;
- Children who had health vulnerabilities, for example, asthma.

Schools within the Ealing Learning Partnership have also suggested that some parents are confused about the changes in lockdown messaging. Despite some improvements to attendance over the course of the lockdown, concerns remain that too many vulnerable children are still not attending school, particularly in secondary provision.

Some schools have found that creating an emphasis for pupils to attend on a particular day of the week has worked well, improving engagement between schools and pupils who are vulnerable. One school has created a weekly '**young carers club'**. This ensures that a member of the provider's staff is in contact with young carers on a weekly basis. Schools have also collected information about young people who have become temporary carers as a result of the outbreak and shared this with key pastoral staff. This ensures that they can monitor these children more closely. Another school has created a '**Hub Day'** every Wednesday to encourage attendance on this particular day. On this day, the counsellor is in school, and they put on an engaging gardening club and opportunities for exercise.

Some schools have worked to alleviate parental anxieties about sending their children to school by generating **visual fliers** to illustrate the social distancing and additional safety measures being put in place in school. Another school found it useful to summarise key Coronavirus news messages and include these in the school newsletter. The authority has recognised the need to support schools by developing factual and clear messaging using Public Health information. This is particularly important in the build up to the expansion of school opening in June.

One school has been offering the opportunity for families to use school time as safe and supportive **respite**, particularly for children and young people who are struggling to engage in home/online learning. This may give parents/carers an opportunity to do weekly shopping, for example. This allows the schools to have contact with children.

One school has managed to track that 95% of students are **engaging online** through attending online lessons, accessing e-mail, and logging onto the Virtual Learning Environment. The school has used *Go4schools* to track engagement. Students not engaging are followed up by teachers.

In many schools, the **DSL holds a weekly call with the social worker of any pupil on CIN/CP plans**. Some schools are attending CIN meetings virtually.

At the outset of the pandemic, most schools **categorised their learners by risk**, using a RAG rating to focus on the most vulnerable. Staff have been regularly updating these risks as new concerns emerge.

In many schools, the **SENDCO or teaching assistant who knows the learner best will telephone and monitor all learners who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan, or those who access support regularly.** This combines a welfare conversation, with a focus on additional support required for online learning tasks.

3.2 Identifying newly vulnerable learners

Schools are working hard to identify children who are becoming more vulnerable due to the pandemic and associated school closures, including those who are just below the threshold for social services involvement. This is particularly challenging for schools as they are not working with children face to face in the school setting. Whilst most schools are harnessing online technologies to educate children, these technologies do not always lend themselves to teachers and other staff being able to identify learners who are encountering issues.

Many schools have decided to **contact the homes of all pupils**, beyond the list of those they considered vulnerable pre covid-19. These schools have asked class teachers/tutors to contact the families of their own class/tutor group to make this manageable. This has been useful as it has enabled schools to learn more about families where there have been no historical concerns. As a result, they have been able to identify some families who have become more vulnerable during the pandemic. The schools were then able to provide help and support. For this to work, the schools issued clear guidance to teachers and tutors about how they should refer any concerns to the DSL.

Several schools have undertaken **wellbeing surveys of learners**. They have used the outcomes of these surveys to instigate follow-up calls with those who indicated worries or concerns. Parents and carers have welcomed these surveys and follow-up calls, and schools have been able to identify families requiring more support. Schools have seen high response rates, although find that a lack of IT access may cause barriers to some pupils responding.

Schools can make use of the **DSL toolkit on Ealing Grid for Learning**. This now has an updated section on 'newly vulnerable children' and poses a number of questions for Designated Safeguarding Lead consideration. The DSL toolkit is available from www.egfl.org.uk/coronavirus#safe **(safeguarding section).**

Some primary schools use **ClassDoJo, an online communication tool** to keep in regular contact with families. This has been an effective way to engage with parents/carers. This has been especially useful when communicating with families who are spending lockdown outside of the UK.

The Secondary Behaviour and Inclusion Service intends to consult and start work with schools to do 'door step' visits. This could include targeting those young people referred to the service who may not be known to social care and are just under the threshold for this but are nonetheless vulnerable. This is a group that schools are particularly concerned about.

3.3 Identifying changes to family circumstances

Schools are finding it more challenging to identify changes in family circumstances as a result of the pandemic and associated lockdown. Therefore, it is harder to ascertain whether or not families have become more vulnerable as a result of the crisis. Teachers and other staff do not have the same level of interaction with children as they would normally in the setting, which complicates the issue further.

Many schools **speak with families when conducting welfare calls** and enquire about how the family have been coping with the pandemic. Some schools have created and distributed parental/ carer surveys which are followed up if concerns or vulnerabilities are identified. Schools often speak with both parents/ carers and children during these telephone calls.

Schools have been using **speech and language therapists (SALT) and other external specialists** to work with families where children have previously accessed additional support. These specialists have been keeping Designated Safeguarding Leads aware about how well children and their families have been coping during lockdown.

3.4 Children's access to online learning and support

A minority of children are unable to access online education and welfare support due to a lack of connectivity and ICT resource at home. Therefore, these children are not always able to access the support or education they need.

One school has been asking **administrative staff to coordinate paper-based work** for pupils who do not have computer access. This ensures that as a minimum, these pupils have access to work for completion. However, some schools have been experiencing issues with paper supplies and the unavailability of photocopier repair services.

Over the next two weeks, 557 laptops will be delivered to Ealing schools so that they can distribute to families. This will encourage attendance of vulnerable groups if children and families are encouraged to come to school to pick up the laptop, offering a chance for face to face contact.

3.5 Mental health

Schools are acutely aware that the anxiety of the pandemic will be placing a strain on children's mental health. They have been implementing a range of innovative practices to respond.

One school has invited its **counselling service** to write a section in the weekly newsletter. This includes tips for mindfulness and breathing exercises. The school has been able to direct pupils as well as parents and carers to this advice.

One school has been using the **Ealing Grid for Learning resources** to post weekly support videos on their website. Videos have included advice on mindfulness, as well as online safety guidance for parents.

One school has offered **counselling services to families through Facetime/Skype**. These have been adapted to fit within online safeguarding requirements.

A group of primary schools are working with Ealing Learning Partnership on **developing COVID-19 related PSHE resources** to support pupils as part of a suite of materials being developed- the "recovery curriculum". The group are keen to expand this work with secondary schools.

Work is underway to develop an agreed process to bring practitioners from the Ealing Wave 2 Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) back into their partner primary schools by the beginning of July 2020. The MHSTs will be in touch with all the partner primary schools they work with.

3.6 Staff wellbeing and support

School leaders are concerned that the generalised anxiety associated with the pandemic will affect staff wellbeing. This is on top of staff dealing with more safeguarding and welfare concerns than they typically would, adding additional pressure.

Schools have started to use **staff wellbeing surveys** to identify staff support needs. Ealing Learning Partnership has created a wellbeing survey for staff. This survey can break down results for individual schools through Survey Monkey. This survey can be accessed by staff sending a request to RayfieldE@ealing.gov.uk. A link will then be issued to the school. This service is available until the 30 June 2020.

Some schools have put on **mini events** to boost both staff and pupil morale. One school found a staff versus pupil 'bake-off' competition was particularly successful. These events have been shared in **weekly staff newsletters that also include reference to popular films, books and puzzles for entertainment at home.**
One school has arranged meetings for staff to meet with HR representatives upon their return to school to discuss their own wellbeing.
Some schools have arranged recovery training with staff, including detailed information about the steps the school has taken to manage the risk of COVID-19 transmission. One school is offering whole school **trauma /attachment** awareness to support staff with managing these issues as they emerge during expanded school opening.

3.7 Year 6 to Year 7 transition

Schools are facing unique challenges in relation to managing Year 6 to Year 7 transition. This is due to the lack of opportunity for parents and schools to work together, and the inability of Year 6 children and their families to visit their new school and meet key staff.

Carefully planned transition is essential to the ongoing welfare of vulnerable children. Primary schools are keen to ensure that children's social workers are in touch with both the primary and secondary school over the summer months. It is vital that secondary schools have access to essential safeguarding information as early as possible.

Some secondary schools have agreed with primary schools that **key staff are able to visit the primary feeder school in person.**

The **ELP transition guidance** produced for all schools in early June places a specific focus on pupils who are vulnerable. Many secondary schools are in weekly contact with Year 6 pupils and their families.

Some secondary schools are considering putting in place **extra capacity to support their new Year 7** cohorts in September. This is particularly important for children who are vulnerable.

Primary schools have found that **virtual meetings to share pupil information** online with secondary schools have been as effective as face-to-face meetings.

Many schools are accessing the **Transition Guide** and other resources on the Ealing Grid for Learning: www.egfl.org.uk/transition-high-schools

3.8 Disclosure of safeguarding concerns

Children are having fewer opportunities to share their worries and concerns with school staff as they would in normal times. As a result, schools are worried that this will impact upon children disclosing concerns of a safeguarding nature.

Many schools have created online '**worry boxes'**. These are enabling children and young people to raise worries and concerns through online learning platforms. Several platforms have been used, including functions within Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams.

Many schools have issued **official school mobile phones** to key safeguarding staff. Learners and young people can contact this emergency number if they have worries or concerns about their welfare.

Most schools have put in place dedicated **safeguarding e-mail addresses.** These can be used by children or other family members if there are specific worries or concerns.

3.9 Year 11 and Year 13 Progression

Secondary schools are concerned about Year 11 and Year 13 pupils who do not have agreed progression plans for the end of the academic year. There is a considerable risk that these young people may become disengaged at the end of the school year. Some Ealing schools have signposted that engaging with Year 13 pupils has been a significant challenge. Some Post-16 providers are reporting an alarming drop in new enrolments and applications.

Many secondary schools have been asking **careers and Connexions staff** to contact any Year 11 or 13 students who are at risk of non-progression at the end of the academic year. This is being targeted at those with historical attendance issues, or those who should be attending school owing to identified vulnerabilities.

The well-established secondary careers network is being used to generate data to determine the scale of the challenge for Year 11 learners and underpin a local strategy.

The Post-16 Leaders network is gathering area-wide issues for learners and liaising with West London College on provision for students at risk of disengaging from education or training.

3.10 Liaison with Social Care

Most schools attending network groups have been positive about the contact they have had with social care. They have found sharing lists of children on child protection and children in need (CIN) plans and the list of one another's contact details useful. In addition, the directive to include an electronic signature on all email replies has ensured up-to-date contact information is more accessible. In fact, feedback from many schools is that interaction between social care and schools has improved during the period of lockdown. Schools have also fed back that the increase in the availability and accessibility of social care colleagues has helped build stronger working relationships across the professional boundaries.

Section 4: Analysis of areas requiring more focus

4.1 Low attendance of vulnerable learners

Attendance levels of vulnerable children are too low, and the level of attendance in secondary schools is particularly worrying. As a result, many vulnerable children are not meeting with school staff face-to-face. EGfL signposts useful information related to improving the attendance of vulnerable children. Available from: www.egfl.org.uk/news/2020/05/support-improve-attendance-most-vulnerable-children-during-covid-19.

4.2 School access to network groups

Due to competing time constraints, staffing and other challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, there are several Schools **unable to access the regular network groups** hosted by the Ealing Learning Partnership. As a result, these schools may not have access to the extensive examples of effective practices being shared between schools. They might also miss essential updates and toolkits provided for schools on the Ealing Grid for Learning.

4.3 Transition from primary to secondary school

Primary and secondary school leaders are worried that the closure period and return to expanded school opening will mean that during the Year 6 to Year 7 transition period, **some safeguarding and welfare issues that emerge over the summer term and break may not be notified to the new secondary school in time**. This may mean that secondary Designated Safeguarding Leads do not have all the essential information regarding their Year 7 cohorts in advance of September.

4.4 Children missing in education

Some Designated Safeguarding Leads are less clear about the next steps they should be taking where **pupils are not engaging with school**, particularly with the removal of enforcement of the parental duty to ensure the regular attendance at school of a registered pupil of compulsory school age. The attendance team at Ealing have created an offer to primary and secondary schools. This can be accessed here: www.egfl.org.uk/services-children/attendance-and-cme.

4.5 Family access to the Internet

Schools have reported that **a significant minority of children and young people are without access to IT devices or internet connectivity**. This has been a considerable challenge that schools have been aiming to overcome. One school reported that 20% of its pupils could not access online education or resources due to a lack of internet connectivity and devices.

4.6 Sharing of effective practice

Schools are producing useful and innovative policies, templates, forms, and processes, and would like an opportunity to share these with other schools, as well as explore resources produced by others. This should mean that schools do not have to recreate resources that are working well elsewhere. Schools welcome the level of support they can access through the Ealing Grid for Learning, but they are unable to upload resources and rely on co-ordination by the authority.

4.7 Referrals

Ealing social care has recorded a significant reduction in safeguarding referrals from education during the lockdown. Referrals have started to increase, although there is some concern that schools are yet to identify many outstanding concerns from the lockdown period. This could cause a surge in referrals to social care as school opening expands.

4.8 Resources in smaller primary schools

Some primary schools have fewer resources than larger secondary providers and those in Multi Academy Trusts who benefit from economies of scale. This may present barriers in terms of IT and device availability, staff resources to monitor and follow-up vulnerable children and the development of home and online learning resources.

Section 5: Recommendations signposted to specific support that the borough can provide

5.1 Recommendations for Schools

5.1.1. Face-to-Face Contact with Vulnerable Children

Each school should strive to have face-to-face contact with all vulnerable children as frequently as possible and strive to increase contact before the end of the summer term. Where this is proving difficult, schools should share this with social care. If schools are concerned that a child is missing in education, they should follow recommendation 5.1.2 below.

5.1.2. Children missing in education

Where schools are concerned about children they suspect are missing in education, they should consult the school attendance offer- www.egfl.org.uk/services-children/attendance-and-cme

This is summarised in a flow chart in **Appendix 1**. The essence of this offer is that schools should firstly try and communicate with parents/ carers using a range of communication methods, including home visits (where applicable). If they remain concerned, and are unsuccessful at establishing contact, the Children Missing in Education (CME) team, led by Lucinda Poole can provide additional support to schools.

5.1.3 Follow-up telephone calls

It is recommended that Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools who have been unable to attend network groups during the pandemic receive a telephone call from the central Ealing team. This will give Designated Safeguarding Leads an opportunity to discuss any matters with a member of the Ealing team. This will ensure that more schools receive access to the shared effective practice of other establishments, as well as allowing the Ealing Learning Partnership to capture examples of practice that are working well for the school. This practice can then be shared through established network groups and online.

5.1.4 Strategies to increase attendance

Schools should be in frequent contact with vulnerable children and their families, this could be via the telephone or online. Schools should consider allocating a member of the safeguarding, leadership or pastoral teams to become the communication link with each child at risk. Schools should ensure that allocated social workers are kept in the loop regarding home/ school communication.
Schools should consider implementing 'hub days' to encourage attendance on an assigned day of the week. On this day, they could ensure more pastoral services are available. They should consider engaging activities that might incentivise attendance. This day may offer schools the opportunity to frequently check-in with their most vulnerable cohort.

Schools should consider offering the opportunity for families to use school opening time as safe and supportive **respite**, particularly for children and young people who are struggling to engage in home/online learning.

5.1.5 Larger secondary schools working with primary schools

Secondary schools have an opportunity to support their closest primary schools during this period. Primary schools lack the economies of scale of larger schools, which means that it is more difficult to solve problems such as ICT availability, developing home learning resources and other resource constraints. These partnerships would have mutual benefit, as both could share best practice during the re-opening phase. Primaries will be opening earlier and could therefore share approaches that are working well with secondary schools.

5.2 Recommendation for the Local Authority

5.2.1 Sharing of resources

Ealing Learning Partnership should investigate the feasibility of developing a 'knowledge Hub' using existing technology to facilitate the two-way sharing and uploading of information for Designated Safeguarding Leads and Inclusion Leaders. This would be linked to the Ealing Grid for Learning. In the meantime, useful policies, resources or templates (anonymised) can be shared through network groups.

5.2.2 Safeguarding referrals

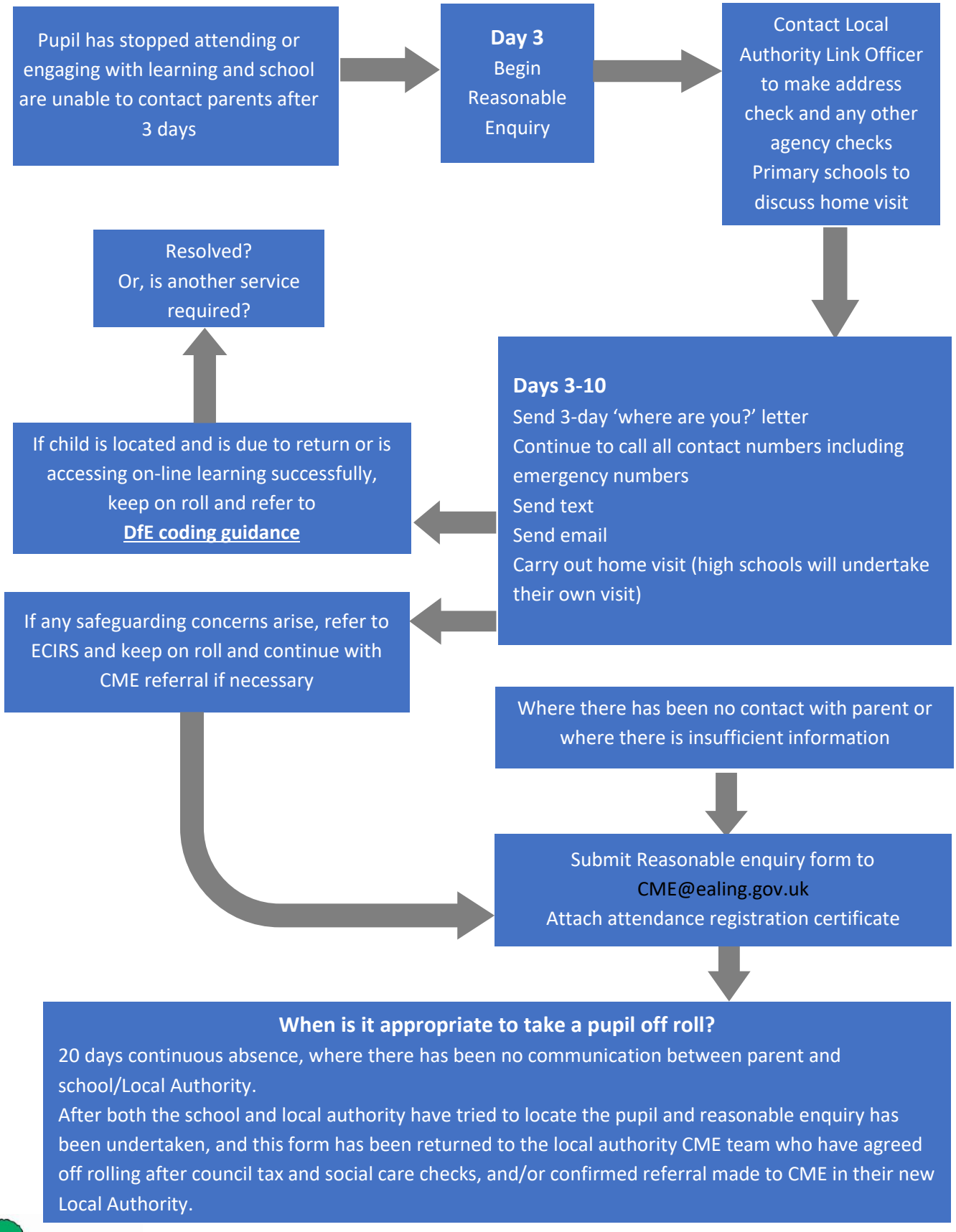
Social Care should develop a breakdown of the reasons for school referral during the pandemic, and the subsequent actions taken by different services. It is hoped that this would reveal information about how capacity within the borough could be strengthened.

Investigate the feasibility of posting a Deputy Team Manager (DTM) to the Ealing Children's Integrated Response service as an advisor to schools. This would provide schools with a service whereby they could get advice from an experienced professional who could also gain experience and expertise in applying the threshold to live case.

5.2.3 Year 6 to 7 transition

For those children in Year 6, it is recommended that social workers communicate with both the primary and transfer secondary school over the summer term and holiday period. This will ensure safeguarding information is shared promptly in advance of secondary transfer. Primary schools are encouraged to make sure safeguarding information and school files are transferred to secondary schools as early as possible.

Appendix 1: Flow chart for Ealing schools: children missing in education during COVID-19



Appendix 2: Telephone call lines of enquiry for primary and secondary schools

Proposed questions to ask when speaking with school DSLs

Purpose of the call:

- To explore the challenges you are facing, and feed this back to the wider Ealing Learning Partnership team
- To offer support and guidance, and signpost relevant resources available from the Ealing Learning Partnership (and EGFL).
- To collate best practice examples from your provision, so that this practice can be shared between schools.

It is not designed to be:

- An audit or assessment
- A method for raising concerns about individual child or young person who you are worried about. If you have concerns, please raise through the formal ECIRS channels (attached below).

Lines of enquiry

What have been the greatest challenges you have faced from safeguarding perspective, and how have you been dealing with these? Are there any specific challenges that you feel we could provide more help or guidance on?

Are you aware of the guidance and support documentation on Ealing Grid for Learning (the safeguarding toolkit)? Have you been using this?

Are you aware of the guidance and support documentation on Ealing Grid for Learning- in particular, the transition resources for Early Years/Reception and Year 6/Year 7? Have you been using these? How is this being managed with children who may still be learning at home?

How many children/ young people have you been expecting in school or sixth form? Of these, on average how many are attending? What methods are working well in terms of improving attendance?

How often are you communicating with the most vulnerable children and young people in your setting? Is anything working particularly well? How frequently have you been making contact? Have you been regularly communicating with social workers for CP/CIN?

How is distance/ online learning working? Have you created procedures for staff to follow? What is working well/ less well? If working well, any tips you could share in relation to how your leadership team maintain oversight for online learning, teaching and assessment?

What mechanism do you use so that staff can raise safeguarding concerns to you as DSL? Are you finding that you get similar numbers of concerns to pre-C19? Have you undertaken C-19 safeguarding update training with staff?

How can children/ young people in your school seek support or report concerns?

How have you been supporting children/ young people with their mental health?

What support is in place for transition into Year 7 during C19? (Year 6 to 7 transition)

Have you identified learners at risk of non- engagement/ progression at the end of year 11? What is being put in place for these CYP? Could we help you to support these children?

Have you identified learners at risk of non- engagement/ progression at the end of year 13? What is being put in place for these CYP? Could we help you to support these children/young people?

How have you supported your staff in relation to dealing with issues that have arisen directly from covid-19 including how to manage contact between vulnerable families and individual staff members?

Are you expecting an excess of referrals/concerns now that increased numbers of children are attending school – how can we support you with managing this potential challenge?

Primary: Are you aware about the recovery curriculum that has been developed by the Compass Hub schools with the support of the Ealing health improvement team?

If queries regarding who DSLs can call for support: the safeguarding toolkit contains the information below:

"If in doubt about whether a request for support is necessary, please contact **ECIRS (020 8825 8000)** which will continue to operate and will be available to provide advice and guidance Monday – Friday (09:00-17:00). Please note that ECIRS and ECSP cannot give health advice relating to COVID-19, please refer to Public Health England https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance

In addition to the team in ECIRS who will take referrals as usual the **Child Protection Advisors** are available to offer guidance and can be contacted on the following numbers:

Child protection adviser	Contact number	on duty week commencing
Ricella Browne	020 8825 6332	25 May, 29 June
Neha Gupta	020 8825 9290	1 June, 6 July
Venita Eastmond-Jessamy	020 8825 6403	8 June, 13 July
Hamdi Zaidan	020 8825 5767	15 June
Sandra Miller	020 8825 6404	22 June

The Safeguarding Manager and **LADO**, Paul Andrews: 07562 435 356

For concerns relating to **Contextual Safeguarding** please contact:

Child protection adviser	Contact number	on duty week commencing
Cat White	020 8825 5362	25 May, 8 and 22 June, 6, 20 July
Rabia Canfield	020 8825 7035	1, 15, 29 June, 13 July

If you have a **Prevent** related concern, please contact

Prevent Education Officer, Anisa Syed: 07545 412 222 or 0208 825 7106

Prevent Team preventschoolsinfo@ealing.gov.uk 0208 825 9849

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