

## Safeguarding FAQs during coronavirus

Please also refer to the most up to date guidance from the DfE which can be found on the EGfL [covid-19 guidance on vulnerable children](#) and [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings](#)

Education and childcare settings are already open to priority groups ([vulnerable children](#) and children of [critical workers](#))<sup>1</sup>. Now that we have made progress in reducing the transmission of coronavirus we are encouraging all eligible children to attend - it is no longer necessary for parents of eligible children to keep them at home if they can. In particular, as per the existing [Supporting vulnerable children and young people during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak guidance](#), vulnerable children of all year groups continue to be expected and encouraged to attend educational provision where it is appropriate for them to do so.

### Who must go to school?

Across the UK, schools are closed except to provide care and education to children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are key workers.

### Who are vulnerable children?

In England, vulnerable children are those who have a social worker and those aged up to 25 with education, health and care (EHC) plans. This includes children who have a child protection plan or are looked after.

Children may also be deemed vulnerable if they have been assessed as being in need or meet the definition in section 17 of the Children Act 1989

Children and young people who have been assessed as otherwise vulnerable by education providers or local authorities (including children's social care services), and who are therefore in need of continued education provision.

This might include children on the edge of care, in alternative provision or young carers, or others, at the education provider and/or local authority's discretion.

### Do all vulnerable children need to go to school?

In England, children with a social worker are expected and encouraged to go to school, provided they don't have an underlying health condition that puts them at severe risk. You may need to explore this fully with allocated workers and the family. Please refer to the [Ealing safeguarding process to help increase the number of vulnerable children and young people attending school](#).

Schools and local authorities should make a risk assessment for children and young people with an education, health and care (EHC) plan, taking parents' and carers' views into account, to decide whether they need to be offered a place in school. Please see section on EGfL under [vulnerable children with EHCPs](#) for further guidance.

### What if parents of vulnerable children don't want to send them to school?

In England, social workers and schools should work with parents of vulnerable children who don't want their children to go to school. Social workers and schools should explore the reasons for this and encourage parents to allow their children to attend. For further guidance please refer to the [Ealing safeguarding process to help increase the number of vulnerable children and young people attending school](#).

A family live with a grandparent who is isolating and do not wish to send the child into school. What should I do?

Contact the allocated worker to ensure they are aware. Confirm with the social worker that this is reasonable as per the paragraph below 'Living with a shielded or clinically vulnerable person' taken from [Guidance](#) updated on 12 May. Use the safeguarding [KIT](#) questions to regularly communicate with the family and contact the social worker if new concerns arise. Consider how to work with the social worker if it is necessary to support the child to learn or work at home, e.g. providing resources, keeping in touch information

[Living with a shielded or clinically vulnerable person](#)

If a child, young person or a member of staff lives with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable), including those who are pregnant, they can attend their education or childcare setting.

If a child, young person or staff member lives in a household with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable, as set out in the [COVID-19: guidance on shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable guidance](#), it is advised they only attend an education or childcare setting if stringent social distancing can be adhered to and, in the case of children, they are able to understand and follow those instructions. This may not be possible for very young children and older children without the capacity to adhere to the instructions on social distancing. If stringent social distancing cannot be adhered to, we do not expect those individuals to attend. They should be supported to learn or work at home.

A family are not willing to send their child to school because they are worried about using public transport to get to school. What should I do?

Discuss these concerns. Is there a way that the child can travel safely by not using public transport, eg. car journey, walking or cycling. If not, are they able to follow guidelines for using public transport e.g. access to face mask and adhere to social distancing.

A family are not willing to send their child to school because they are worried about the child catching the virus. What should I do?

Discuss these concerns. Ealing's CCG have produced some [information regarding the use of PPE](#) which contains a [Quick Reference Guide for schools](#) This may help to address these concerns and resolve the situation to enable parents to send their child to school. Also refer to Ealing's briefing for parents. You may also find the fact sheet for professionals produced by PHE helpful to address common anxieties.

I have tried several times to get in touch with the family but have had no response?

Is there a history of non-attendance? You can refer to your school attendance service in the usual way or contact 020 8825 5040 (school attendance service) or contact Lucinda Poole directly 07949 766897 (Service Manager). Discuss your concerns and agree a way forward – the school attendance service may decide to make a home visit, or it may require intervention from another service.

What should I do if I am unable to contact the allocated worker?

Is this due to an out of office or sickness? Contact Duty team on 020 8825 5000 to confirm and follow up as appropriate. You may find the updated list of contacts (password protected) on EGfL. This contains details of team managers if required for follow up or immediate action.

Are nurseries and other childcare settings open?

Across the UK nurseries, pre-schools and other childcare settings should remain open for children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are key workers

## What changes should be made to schools' safeguarding policies and procedures?

In England, schools and colleges should continue to follow the statutory guidance, Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) Schools and colleges should review their child protection policy and revise it in line with current circumstances. A COVID-19 annexe or addendum may be more appropriate than re-writing the whole policy. Sample addendums have already been shared via the DSL network. Contact Karen Gibson [KGibson@eling.gov.uk](mailto:KGibson@eling.gov.uk) for more information. Staff and volunteers should be made aware of the new policy and kept up to date if it is revised. The policy should also be made available publicly

## What happens if nominated child protection leads need to self-isolate or become ill?

In England, where it is not possible for a designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or deputy to be on site, a trained DSL should be contactable via phone or online video. This could be the school's own DSL if they are working from home or a shared DSL or deputy from another school. If a trained DSL or deputy is not on site, a senior leader should take responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site

## What should I do if a child becomes ill with a continuous cough or has a high temperature whilst at school?

Contact the parent and make arrangements for the child to be sent home. Advice should be given to parents to follow the staying at home guidance.

If a child is awaiting collection, they should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, depending on the age of the child and with appropriate adult supervision if required. Ideally, a window should be opened for ventilation. If it is not possible to isolate them, move them to an area which is at least 2 metres away from other people.

If they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they should use a separate bathroom if possible. The bathroom should be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else.

If a member of staff has helped someone who was taken unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves. They should wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell. Cleaning with normal household disinfectant after someone with symptoms has left will reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people. You can find [guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings](#).

There is a dedicated helpline number for education and children's social care related queries for anyone working in early years through to universities, plus parents. You can call 0800 046 8687 – 8am to 6pm (Monday to Friday) or 10am to 4pm (Saturday to Sunday) – for any specific question not covered in the [guidance for educational settings](#)

## How should attendance be monitored?

In England, schools do not need to take an attendance register. However they should submit a [daily attendance form](#) which will enable them to keep track of attendance for safeguarding purposes and to allow the DfE to track capacity. Schools should follow up on any child they were expecting to attend school who does not. Social workers should be notified of any vulnerable children who do not attend school. For more information see EGfL section [Attendance](#)

## Can children who aren't defined as vulnerable but who may be at risk go to school?

In England, the guidance states that leaders of educational settings and designated safeguarding leads will know who their most vulnerable children are. Schools have the flexibility to offer places to children who are "on the edge" of receiving support from children's social care. It may also be helpful to use the [Safeguarding Toolkit](#) and the [KIT](#) questions in order to monitor any individual children you may have concerns about. Both can be found on EGfL section [Safeguarding](#) and [Vulnerable Children](#)

## How should schools and childcare settings implement social distancing measures?

In England the DfE has published guidance on [social distancing for schools and childcare settings](#). This sets out the measures schools should take to minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus whilst ensuring children are being well cared for.

## How should schools look after children's mental health and wellbeing?

In England, teachers should be mindful of the current circumstances and how they are affecting children and families when they are setting expectations of children's work at home. Existing provision for mental health support for children and young people may be delivered through different means, for example over the phone.

Detailed advice can be found [here](#). Additionally, Ealing Health Improvement Team are currently sending out daily ebulletins with ideas and practical advice for children and adults. To receive these free ebulletins contact the Healthy Schools Team [McGregorN@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:McGregorN@ealing.gov.uk) with the title OPT IN

## Will children face stigma if they attend school because they're vulnerable?

In England, guidance states that most children attending school now will be there because their parents are key workers. This means vulnerable children should not be easily identifiable by their peers. However, if consent is required by parents to share information between services this should be confirmed before contact is made.

## What should schools do about free school meals?

In England, schools should continue to provide free school meals to all eligible children through either meals or food parcels from their usual catering team or supermarket vouchers through the new national scheme. Details can be found on EGfL under [Free School Meals](#) (Updated 7 April). If you have any further questions please contact the pupil support service at [pupilsupport@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:pupilsupport@ealing.gov.uk) 0208 825 5566.

## Can I signpost parents to any other support?

The School Partnership and Enrichment Team have made their [Horizons Bulletin](#) available for use. It provides professionals with a useful summary of information about a wide range of support opportunities available to schools and families in and around Ealing. Ealing's [Family Information](#) Service is being updated regularly with advice and support for schools and parents as well as the Local Offer section. Additionally, there are dedicated pages on Ealing Council website and If you, or someone you know is vulnerable and without support, you can visit [Ealing Together](#) to safely request help through a trusted referral route. You can also use this website to offer support to Ealing's COVID-19 response.

## Can children still see both parents if their parents are separated?

Across the UK, people must comply with social distancing guidelines. However, the guidelines state that where parents do not live in the same household, children under 18 can move between their parents' homes.

In England, Cafcass has published guidance on co-parenting and contact arrangements. This states that children should maintain their usual routine of spending time with each of their parents unless doing so would put the child, parents or others at risk.

In England and Wales, guidance from the Courts and Tribunals Judiciary states that separated parents should communicate with each other and decide what would be a good, practical solution to maintaining the conditions of child arrangement orders during the pandemic. If one parent is sufficiently concerned that complying with child arrangement orders would be against current public health advice, they may change the arrangement to one they feel is safe. If a child does not get to spend time with one of their parents as set out in the child arrangement order, alternative arrangements should be made to maintain regular contact. This could be through video call or telephone.

### How will the school manage any Operation Encompass notification?

The police notifications will be sent as usual to The Box. Therefore, if you are an Operation Encompass school the DSL will continue to receive notifications. However, please remember that ECIRS also receive these notifications, so will be alerted to new incidents and will follow up accordingly. You should add the children you are notified of to your vulnerable child list if they are not already listed and follow the usual procedure of contacting ECIRS if an additional concern arises – which may be more common during these exceptional times.

I am aware that there has been a history of Domestic Abuse in the home. Mother is a key worker and father will work at home but they have not requested a school place

Check to see if the case is still open to social care and if the family receiving support from any other services. Have there been any concerns for the safety and wellbeing of the family prior to the school closing? Consider offering a school place. Consider direct regular contact with the family to see how home learning is progressing.

We have made a referral to ECIRS that was NFA in the last two weeks. The DSL considers the child to be more vulnerable as they are now at home. Can ECIRS re-consider the concerns under the new circumstances?

Contact ECIRS to discuss the concerns and to ask for advice. Consider additional support to the family e.g. contact for work, contact for behaviour

We have identified a child on a Plan but parents have NOT taken up the offer of a school place that is available

The allocated worker should be made aware of this