

# Safeguarding Policy Addendum

## Covid-19



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## Context

In response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the UK government has asked parents to keep their children at home wherever possible. Schools, and all childcare providers, are, however, being asked to provide care for a limited number of children - children who are vulnerable, and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and who cannot be safely cared for at home.

The key principles of our existing Safeguarding and Child Protection policy still apply as follows;

- With regard to safeguarding, the best interests of children must always continue to come first
- A DSL or deputy will be available at all times the school is open
- If anyone in a school or college has a safeguarding concern about any child they should continue to act immediately and inform the DSL/deputy DSL
- Unsuitable people will not be allowed to enter our workforce and/or gain access to children
- Children will continue to be protected when they are online

We will ensure that any new policies and processes in response to COVID-19 will not weaken our approach to safeguarding or undermine this policy.

## Vulnerable children

Current guidance<sup>1</sup> defines vulnerable children as “those who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with education, health and care (EHC) plans.

Those who have a social worker include children who have a child protection plan (CP) and those who are looked after by the local authority. A child may also be deemed to be vulnerable if they have been assessed as being in need or otherwise meet the definition in section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

In line with the current guidance, we will risk assess those children/young people with an EHC plan in consultation with the local authority (LA) and parents, to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a school or college place in order to meet their needs, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home. This could include, if necessary, carers, therapists or clinicians visiting the home to provide any essential services. Many children and young people with EHC plans can safely remain at home.

Our Senior Leadership Teams (SLT) and especially our Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) and their deputies know who our most vulnerable children are. Our schools will continue to work with and support children’s social workers to help protect vulnerable children. This includes working with and supporting children’s social workers and the local authority virtual school head (VSH) for looked-after and previously looked-after children.

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend an education setting, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at risk and will continue to encourage to our vulnerable children and young people to attend a school, including remotely if needed.

In circumstances where parents do not want to bring their child to an education setting, and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker and school leaders will explore the reasons for this directly with the parents. Where parents are concerned about the risk of the child contracting COVID-19, leaders or the social worker will talk through these anxieties with the parent/carer following the advice set out by Public Health England.

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1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>

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## Designated Safeguarding Leads

Each school in the Trust aims to have a DSL (or at least one deputy) available on site as far as is possible in current COVID-19 circumstances in line with statutory guidance<sup>2</sup>. Where this is not possible the DSL (or deputy) will be available via phone, Skype or online video - for example when working from home. Where a trained DSL (or deputy) is not on site, a DSL from one of the other schools in the Trust will be available for contact.

This might include updating and managing access to online management system and liaising with the offsite DSL (or deputy) and children's social workers where they require access to children in need and/or to carry out statutory assessments at the school or college. All staff on-site will be notified whether the DSL, deputy DSL [or which member of the SLT] is on site each day and the process for speaking to them.

The DSL will continue to engage with social workers, and co-ordinate remote attendance of case holding staff at all multi-agency meetings.

## Reporting a concern

Where staff have a concern about a child/young person, they should continue to follow the process outlined in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, this includes making a report using our usual process.

In the unlikely event that a member of staff cannot access the online system from home, they should email the DSL and deputies. This will ensure that the concern is received. Initials should be used in any e-mail, not a child's full name.

All staff are reminded of the need to report any concern immediately and without delay. Where staff are concerned about an adult working with children in the school, they should report the concern to the headteacher/principal as soon as possible. This should be done verbally and followed up with an email to the headteacher within 24 hours. Concerns around the Headteacher should be directed to the CEO, Penny Barratt, and concerns about the CEO should be directed to the Chair of Directors: David Tait and if the concern is in relation to the Chair of Directors or anyone on the Board of Directors the LADO should be informed directly at [lado@islington.gov.uk](mailto:lado@islington.gov.uk)

Advice may also be sought from the Principal Officer Safeguarding in Education on 0207 527 5595.

## Attendance monitoring

Current guidance states that local authorities and education settings do not need to complete their usual day-to-day attendance processes to follow up on non-attendance. However, we will continue to be aware of all children and young people's visibility through our virtual and online teaching and learning processes. In relation to vulnerable children, we will liaise with social workers and family support workers to agree with parents/carers whether children subject to child protection plans or child-in-need (CIN) plans should be attending school and will follow up on any pupil who is expected to attend and does not using our usual first day absence processes. We will also follow up with parents/carers who have arranged care for their child/ren but the children do not then attend.

School staff will, when communicating with parents and carers, confirm emergency contact numbers are correct and ask for any additional emergency contact numbers where they are available.

**In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at school, or stops attending without prior agreement and notification, leaders will notify their social worker.**

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2. Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2019.

## Safeguarding training and induction.

During the period that COVID-19 measures are in place, our DSL (and deputies) who are all trained will continue to be classed as a trained DSL (or deputy) even if they miss their refresher training.

All existing school staff have had safeguarding training and have read part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019). The DSL will communicate with staff any new local arrangements, so they know what to do if they are worried about a child.

Where new staff are recruited, or new volunteers join one of the schools in the Trust they will continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction. If staff are deployed from another education or children's workforce setting to our school, we will consider the DfE supplementary guidance on safeguarding children during the COVID-19 pandemic and will accept portability as long as their current employer confirms in writing that the member of staff/volunteer:

- Has been subject to Safer Recruitment checks including an enhanced DBS and children's barred list check
  - Has received appropriate safeguarding training
  - Is not currently subject to an ongoing disciplinary investigation
- and*
- That there are no known concerns about the individual's suitability to work with children

Upon arrival at a Bridge London Trust school they will be given access to our safeguarding and child protection policy, including this addendum and our local processes and including confirmation of DSL arrangements for that day and subsequent days.

## Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff

It remains essential that people who are unsuitable are not allowed to enter the children's workforce or gain access to children. When recruiting new staff, The Bridge London Trust will continue to follow safer recruitment processes, including, as appropriate, relevant sections in part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019) (KCSIE).

In response to COVID-19, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has made changes to its guidance on standard and enhanced DBS ID checking to minimise the need for face-to-face contact. If we are utilising volunteers, we will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process as set out in paragraphs 167 to 172 of KCSIE, 2019. Under **no circumstances** will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

We will continue to follow the legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult. (Full details can be found at paragraph 163 of KCSIE). We will continue to consider and make referrals to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) as per paragraph 166 of KCSIE, 2019 and the TRA's 'Teacher misconduct advice for making a referral by emailing [misconduct.teacher@education.gov.uk](mailto:misconduct.teacher@education.gov.uk)

Whilst acknowledging the challenge of the current national emergency, it is essential from a safeguarding perspective that any school is aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers will be in the school or college, and that appropriate checks have been carried out, especially for anyone engaging in regulated activity. We will continue to keep the single central record (SCR) up to date as outlined in paragraphs 148 to 156 in KCSIE, 2019.

## Online safety in schools and colleges

The Bridge London Trust will continue to provide a safe environment for all our pupils, including online. This includes the use of an online filtering system. Where students are using computers in school, appropriate supervision will be in place.



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## Children and online safety away from school and college

It is important that all staff who interact with children, including online, continue to look out for signs a child may be at risk of harm or neglect. Any such concerns should be dealt with in line with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and where appropriate referrals should still be made to children's social care and if required, the police.

Online teaching should follow the same principles as set out in the school's code of conduct.

We will ensure any use of online learning tools and systems is in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements. All staff are made aware of the following considerations when delivering virtual lessons, especially where webcams are involved:

- No 1:1s, groups only, with a second adult (TA) as part of the group. This is also the case when using breakout room as part of an online sessions
- Teaching to take place within normal school hours
- 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 the background should be blurred
- Live classes should be recorded 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
- Staff must only use platforms provided by The Bridge London Trust to communicate with pupils
- Staff should record, the length, time, date and attendance of any sessions held

## Supporting children not in school

The Bridge London Trust is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all pupils. Where the DSL has identified a child to be on the edge of social care support, or who would normally receive pastoral-type support in school, they should ensure that a robust plan is in place for that child or young person. Details of this plan will be recorded on Bromcom, as well as a record of any contact made with the child and/or their family.

The communication plans can include; remote contact, phone contact, door-step visits. Other individualised contact methods should be considered and recorded. The Bridge London Trust and our DSL will work closely with all stakeholders to maximise the effectiveness of any communication plan which will be reviewed regularly (at least once a fortnight). Where concerns arise, the DSL will consider any referrals as appropriate.

The school will share safeguarding messages on its website and social media pages and this will include identifying how children and families can talk to the DSL or their deputies if they need to.

We recognise that school is a protective factor for children and young people, and the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents/carers. Our teaching staff are aware of this and will take this into account when setting work for pupils and also in relation to their expectations of the quantity and quality of pupils' work whilst they are at home.

We will ensure that where we care for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, we ensure appropriate support is in place for them. This will be bespoke to each child and recorded in line with our normal reporting and recording procedures.

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## Supporting children in school

The Bridge London Trust is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its students and we will continue to be a safe space for all children to attend and flourish. The Headteachers will ensure that appropriate staff are on site and staff to pupil ratio numbers are appropriate, to maximise safety.

We will refer to the Government guidance for education and childcare settings on how to implement social distancing and continue to follow the advice from Public Health England on handwashing and other measures to limit the risk of spread of COVID-19.

We will ensure that where we care for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, we ensure appropriate support is in place for them. This will be bespoke to each child and recorded in line with our normal procedures. Where leaders have concerns about the impact of staff absence – such as our Designated Safeguarding Lead or first aiders – we will discuss them immediately with the Academy Trust.

## Peer on Peer Abuse

The Bridge London Trust recognises that during the closure a revised process may be required for managing any report of peer on peer abuse and supporting victims. Where we receive a report of peer on peer abuse, we will follow the principles as set out in part 5 of KCSIE, 2019 and of those outlined within our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. We will listen and work with children and young people, parents/carers and multi-agency partners to ensure the safety and security of the child/young person concerned. All concerns and actions will be recorded in line with our normal safeguarding processes and appropriate referrals made.

## Support from Islington Council

In Islington, the following services will continue to provide support and guidance as appropriate to enable the DSL to carry out their role effectively:

- Head of the Virtual School: 0207 527 3993 or [matthew.blood@islington.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.blood@islington.gov.uk)
- Principal Officer Safeguarding in Education: 0207 527 5595 or [michelle.virdi@islington.gov.uk](mailto:michelle.virdi@islington.gov.uk)
- Children's Services Contact Team: 0207 527 7400 for urgent child protection referrals and [csct@islington.gov.uk](mailto:csct@islington.gov.uk) for all other queries and CIN and Targeted Family Support Referrals
- LADO: 0207 527 8102 or [lado@islington.gov.uk](mailto:lado@islington.gov.uk)