



# **Pam Gartland**

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## **SAFEGUARDING FIRST**

### **Safeguarding Advice for Coronavirus**

In these unprecedented times we have written the following advice to support you in immediate measures for safeguarding and keeping children safe in the event of enforced school closure.

#### **Children with Child Protection Plans**

All decisions around the safety and well-being of children that are the subject of plans should be made in collaboration with the other members of the core group. This includes a strict strategy in the managing of contact with them should they or their families be self-isolating or the Government imposes a lock down. In discussion with each school's own local authority or private company for safeguarding arrangements, decisions should be made around home visiting or telephone contact. It is the view of Safeguarding First that schools should be responsible for phone contact with their **most vulnerable** children and families (**daily**) and home visits (**doorstep only**) should only be taken if absolutely necessary or agreed in discussion and with the support of your local authority and social workers (**and only upon confirmation that the family are not self-isolating due to the Coronavirus**). Each local authority may have a different approach so you **MUST** discuss this with them before putting any plans into effect. It is necessary to have a view from your safeguarding partnership arrangements around these decisions also. Please seek to gain this in writing from them.

#### **Safety planning**

To support those children who will be extremely vulnerable during this time, in the first instance please prioritise safety planning with them for the time they will be unable to access school provision.

This includes looking at the risk factors in their home or their own families risk taking behaviour with them, how they can manage these risks, ways in which they can keep themselves safe and ensuring they have all the necessary contact details for statutory support (social care or police) for national support (Childline) and for school (during the school day - consider how your school landline can re-direct to Headteacher/DSL's phone if necessary or should your site be shut and no staff in place). Talking to children about how they can gain access to a phone and safely is important. Alongside this, agreeing with them a potential code word that they can say

to you if they feel unsafe, particularly as any contact with you will potentially be in front of or around those who may pose a risk to them is extremely important.

**However please consider how you do this so that you do not need raise the anxiety of your children, it may only be necessary for older children.**

With this in mind any contact with children should follow your staff behaviour policy/code of conduct/safer working practices guidance for personal contact with children (if you are using your own personal phone please hide your number or use 141).

As this is an anxious time for both children and adults alike, ways in which children can keep themselves calm, manage their anxiety and practice mindfulness is important to have as part of their safety plan. Ensure that you talk to children about how they might be feeling and any additional anxieties they might have, it may be around their education or attainment rather than being at home. Please ensure that you ask them how school can support them at this time.

### **Children in Need**

The same advice as above except telephone contact with the child and family should be **twice weekly** (this should be stepped up or stepped down based on your school's level of concern regarding the family).

### **Looked After Children**

The same advice as children in need except telephone contact and/or doorstep visiting should be on an individual case by case basis. For example, children who are in care of family members, inclusive of older family members e.g. grandparents may require more support and contact. The support of your virtual school and Virtual Headteacher should be requested in this instance alongside your local authority, social care and your safeguarding partnership arrangements as the local authority remain **corporate parents** for looked after children. Ensure that you have the appropriate contact details for corporate parents for all looked after children and please again seek confirmation on procedures from them in writing.

### **Early Help**

The same advice as above except telephone contact should be on a **weekly** basis.

### **Children with Medical Needs or Disabilities**

The same advice as above except telephone contact and/or doorstep visiting should be on an individual case by case basis. It is imperative that all families who have children with medical needs or disabilities have practical plans in place to manage the needs of their children should self-isolation or Government imposed lock down occur. This includes primarily that they have all the necessary equipment and medication to manage their child's needs in the event of any imposed isolation and have all of the practical access to provisions and pharmacies to meet their child's medication needs. If parents themselves have medical needs then it is necessary that schools increase the level of contact with these families to ensure they are all

safe and well and able to access services that they need. In circumstances of this level of need **daily contact** would be recommended.

### **Practical Support For All Pupils**

#### **Handwashing**

All students should be reminded of the need to continue with strict hygiene and hand washing at regular intervals and for at least 20 seconds.

#### **Education**

All possible steps should be taken to support children with their education whilst they are not at school. This should include work that can be taken home, useful websites and any practical steps that parents can take to support their children whilst not in education. Time should be taken to reassure children (particularly those facing exam times) that there is no need to worry and that they should continue to do as much as they can whilst at home and not at school. Schools may have their own mechanisms for the monitoring and support for this.

#### **School Contact**

As stated above, ensure that children know what level of contact schools will have with them and what to expect so that phone calls do not come out of the blue. Regularly update your school website, social media and school apps with information, positive news and contact to keep children and families updated and remind them that you are available remotely. Consider webinars or video short bursts of activity that you regularly do in school such as a phonics class or GCSE revision tips (making sure you have permissions for all of those involved) and post them on your website to help children and parents with practising skills with children that they may not know how to do.

#### **Safer Working Practices**

Please ensure that you set out clear guidelines under your school's staff behaviour policy/code of conduct or safer working practices about your expectations of staff in maintaining contact with children. While you need to be flexible with technology it is important that staff remain professional at all times and ensure any personal mobile use is protected or schools use only school technology wherever possible.

#### **Going Outside During School Closure**

Children should be reminded to follow the government's guidance on this. Parents should not be arranging park play dates or meet ups with multiple parents and children whilst not attending school. It is important to reinforce this with children and parents and look at practical things they can do, such as being out in their back garden or yard for fresh air and games.

#### **Trusted Adults**

All children should be reminded that whilst they are not in school they need to ensure that they are aware of who their trusted adults are e.g. parents, carers, grandparents

and that if at any time they feel unsafe the steps they should take to get help. Practical steps like ensuring children know how to contact police, social care and Childline and school should be offered to children as well as seeking support online or via mobile telephones. Children should be reminded about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour from trusted adults and how to seek help if they feel at risk.

### **Community Support**

Advice to children about what is available in their local communities is important so compile a list of local restaurants/bars offering take away or deliveries alongside local shelters, food banks and any other available community support that can be given to parents as well and how this can be accessed.

### **Safeguarding First Ltd**

At this time we are absolutely committed to supporting you in keeping the children you educate safe. We will continue to support you remotely via, telephone, e-mail and skype. We will continue to give you information and support regarding any of the circumstances of change that will be coming over the next few months. Please do not hesitate to contact us.

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### **Links to helpful documents**

Safer working practices document

<https://www.saferrecruitmentconsortium.org/GSWP%20Sept%202019.pdf>

NSPCC Childline 0800 1111 and [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)