

Vale of Glamorgan Council's responses to Welsh Government:

'Vulnerable Children Attending School'

1. Welsh Government is aware that the majority of children still attending school are those of key workers and that vulnerable children are largely being kept at home to reduce the risk of catching the virus. Does this reflect the position in your local authority? If not, please explain what the situation is in your area.

Yes take up is low reflecting parental choice to keep children at home and a focus on providing 'childcare' within schools for those most vulnerable.

2. What steps has your local authority taken to identify and keep contact with children at risk and vulnerable children and any prioritisation so they remain visible during this lockdown?

All teams have reviewed the children they are involved with and undertaken an assessment linked to risk and vulnerability, identifying those of greatest concern. In the early stages of the pandemic, face to face visits were frontloaded anticipating that these opportunities would reduce.

All children and families are currently being supported remotely using a range of creative methods. This means we are in regular contact (daily for some) but not for example maintaining statutory 10-day visits to those on the CPR.

There is an inevitability about this at the present time, but we continue to review in some detail the emerging concerns we anticipate in not being able to sight children over time, balanced against the range of factors related to Covid-19. These include risk of infection of course, the reality of some families self-isolating, a duty of care to our workforce, and our responsibility to assess and manage risk.

Whilst remote oversight is largely considered adequate at this time, this will change over time (whether in days or weeks depending on the individual circumstances) and we continue to consider this also.

Delivering business as usual and visiting as normal is not socially responsible at the current time, but we will continue to review where face to face visits are necessary, balancing and prioritising in our risk assessments and being clear also on the purpose of our visit. We have also identified capacity across the wider service from which staff can be repurposed when capacity in our frontline teams is reduced.

3. Has your local authority identified any reduction in the number of child safeguarding reports/referrals?

Yes, we have seen a reduction in referrals overall at the current time.

4. As you are aware, we have put together an issues log and we are working through the comments you have sent back so far. You may also want to use this e-mail to inform us of other issues you are working with, for example: Has your local authority identified any specific issues in relation to support for care leavers? What steps have you taken to respond to any changing needs?

Our care leavers are being supported remotely including the use of WhatsApp for video calls. We are ensuring the provision of their allowances and responding where additional needs are identified, offering emotional and practical support. There are some concerns re the activity of some young people meeting socially in close proximity and we continue to work with partners to offer strong and clear advice in this regard.

5. Has your local authority identified any specific issues in relation to the provision of services in children's homes (and Keri re: Hillside).

We are having difficulties with a residential provider who has given notice in respect of a young person and where there are no alternative options. Similarly with the potential for a premature discharge from a hospital setting with limited community options.

6. Contact arrangements and how you have changed working practices so that families can maintain their connections.

Face to face contact has been replaced with remote arrangements at the current time, and will continue to be reviewed.