

# The Impact of Covid 19 on Children's Social Care & Early Help

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# Overall Context



- Children's Social Care has continued to operate throughout the pandemic, albeit in a modified way in some circumstances.
- Some social workers have continued to be office based with home visits and direct contact with children and families undertaken when new referrals were received.
- Referrals initially reduced during the pandemic. Referrals are now back to levels in line with pre-Covid data. We anticipate and are actively preparing for a future surge as well as the experiences of children who are in abusive or neglectful situations.
- We have remained in contact with all children and families who were already known to use using a combination of technology and home visiting.
- Early Help has moved to a virtual model with support provided over the phone. This is now moving back towards business as usual.



# Domestic Abuse



- Domestic abuse was a key focus for us pre-pandemic being the reason for a significant proportion of referrals made to the MASH.
- We are planning for an significant increase in the number of referrals as lockdown eases and particularly more children return to school.
- We are already starting to see this increase. The nature of many of the cases that are coming to our attention are particularly severe and complex.



# Exploitation and Online Harm



- Exploitation continued to be a serious concern throughout lockdown although it was even more difficult to identify and intervene. Incidents of serious youth violence reduced during this period however we have started to return to pre-lockdown levels.
- Online harm and exploitation is likely to have increased during this period however this is particularly difficult to address without victims making disclosures. We anticipate this to be a feature of concern identified by schools at the point of a fuller return of pupils.



# Home Visits



- When new referrals were made to the MASH, the majority of these families were visited in person. Social workers observe social distance in family homes and are provided with Personal Protective Equipment where it is required.
- Families who were already known to us were risk assessed and home visits undertaken to those where the risk was deemed to be most severe.
- Some families were understandably concerned about home visits and where possible, their wishes were respected in regard to this.
- We are increasing the number of home visits as lockdown eases, focusing on those families who we have not seen in person.



# Future demand



- While it is very difficult to predict future demand accurately, particularly in these unprecedented circumstances we are preparing for a significant surge in referrals between now and the end of the year.
- Approximately one quarter of our referrals come from schools, while all children with a social worker were entitled to attend school, only around 10-12% did. We expect that as schools reopen for more children we will receive a significant increase in referrals.
- This demand is likely to filter into parts of the service and will likely lead to an increase in children coming into our care. This will potentially have a financial impact as additional placements are required.



# Any questions?



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