

Medway Early Years SEND Team

Direct working during COVID-19 pandemic

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1. Introduction and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for conducting direct (in-person) activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It will be updated regularly in line with national and local government guidance and should run alongside existing recommendations for reducing risks to health.

This policy will be made available to parents and carers on request.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- *"Staying safe outside your home"*
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-safe-outside-your-home/staying-safe-outside-your-home>
- *"Implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings"*
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>
- *"Returning to the workplace: Safety considerations for practising psychologists"*
<https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Returning%20to%20the%20workplace%20-%20safety%20considerations%20for%20practising%20psychologists.pdf>
- *"Disinfecting Testing Materials" – guide produced by Pearson, 2020*

Staff who are shielding and clinically vulnerable should continue to follow government guidance and should not work outside the home.

Additionally, anyone who is displaying coronavirus symptoms, or has displayed symptoms in the previous 7 days, or lives with someone who has displayed symptoms in the previous 14 days, should not attend work unless they have tested negative for coronavirus.

The main symptoms of coronavirus are:

- A high temperature
- A new, continuous cough

- A loss of, or change to, sense of smell or taste.

It is expected that individual members of staff will reflect on their own risk (both to themselves and to others) and make appropriate decisions about their suitability to engage in activities described in this policy.

2. Visits to early years settings, schools, colleges, and other Local Authority buildings

Consent to work in this way (in person) will be requested during initial contact with parents and carers and will be recorded via email (in line with current consent-gathering practices for virtual assessment).

Schools, Early Years Settings and Colleges

Government guidance as of 24th May 2020 warns settings to “limit external visitors to the setting and ensure they only come into the building when strictly necessary, for example if providing an essential service or essential support for a child’s health and wellbeing.”

It is therefore important that any work we plan to conduct directly (rather than virtually) can be defended as “essential”. Where we feel that an activity can be conducted virtually, we will continue to do work in this way.

Follow up guidance (3rd June 2020) states that “meetings [with external visitors] should take place at a safe distance, and so the use of small offices may not be suitable.” Staff should discuss room suitability with settings when determining whether it would be appropriate to visit.

This policy is designed to run alongside new and existing policies in place within the settings we intend to visit.

The setting has the final decision with regards to our visit.

To reduce the risk of members of staff acting as “super spreaders”, visits to education settings will be limited to one per day. Furthermore, clothing worn on visits will be washed after use.

During visits to settings, early years SEND team staff will not use setting staff facilities (such as staff rooms and kitchens) and will only use toilet and hand-washing facilities designated to visitors. To reduce risk of contact contamination, we will bring our own food/drinks if required.

Local Authority buildings

During this time, it may be possible to arrange direct (in person) visits at another Local Authority building (for example Gun Wharf, a Children and Families hub).

At the time of writing this policy, the following information was provided regarding the use of these facilities:

- Chatham Children and Families Hub is available for us to use to hold meetings with members of the public. This is subject to approval of the visit following the completion of a booking form. Visits are arranged on a rota basis, and so flexibility of timings during the initial booking process is encouraged.

The remaining Children and Families Hubs are closed to external visitors (15th June).

The wearing of PPE

Guidance from the government (1st June 2020) states that “PPE is only needed in a very small number of cases:

- Children, young people, and learners whose care routinely already involves the use of PPE due to their intimate care needs should continue to receive their care in the same way
- PPE should be worn if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained from any child, young person or other learner displaying coronavirus symptoms”

Based on this guidance, there is no requirement for Early Years SEN staff visiting schools to wear PPE.

Use of resources

Where practical and possible, the use of resources will be kept to a minimum in order to reduce the risk of indirect [contact] exposure with coronavirus. However, where resources are required, there are a number of steps that should be taken to minimise risk:

- Children and young people to show us their schoolbooks, so that we do not need to touch the books ourselves
- Children to bring writing materials (pencils, pens, paper) to the assessment (provided by school) and take them away afterwards
- Only required assessment materials will be transported to the visit, and larger assessment bags/kits will be left in the office. Required materials will be transported in disposable or washable bags.
- To reduce contact with assessment materials, children, and young people to be encouraged to point to correct response (possibly using a pointing implement that they will take away afterwards)
- Where contact is unavoidable, materials will be cleaned (see below for guidance) between assessments to avoid cross-contamination

New protocol for the use and after-care of equipment:

- After using equipment (but before leaving the setting), staff to place any used materials in a plastic bag marked “dirty”
- When returning to the office/home, staff to clean materials using single-use kitchen towel/paper towel and antibacterial spray, or soap and water (if appropriate)

Cleaning supplies will be made available to staff at Gun Wharf.

3. Home visits

Government guidance as of 16th June 2020 encourages the use of social distancing and meeting others in outdoor areas such as parks or up to 6 people in gardens.

Consent to work in this way (in person) will be requested during initial contact with parents and carers and will be recorded via email (in line with current consent-gathering practices for virtual assessment).

It is therefore important that any work we plan to conduct directly (rather than virtually) can be defended as “essential”. Where we feel that an activity can be conducted virtually, we will continue to do work in this way.

To reduce the risk of members of staff acting as “super spreaders”, visits to homes will be limited to one per day. Furthermore, clothing worn on visits will be washed after use.

Use of PPE / Equipment / Resources as above in section 2.

4. Summary

This policy creates a framework and protocol for Early Years SEN staff to work within during the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to direct (in person) contact with education settings, children and young people, and their families.

With the ever-changing picture of risk at a national and local level, this policy will be reviewed and amended (if needed) weekly during team meetings.

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