

Response to Covid 19

Practice Guidance on Visiting, RAG rating and Recording

Introduction

This guidance replaces the visiting children document issued on the 9th of April 2020 following the most recent Government advice. On the 3rd of April 2020 BASW published practice guidance for home visits. In West Sussex all services have been asked to RAG rate their cases as a priority to identify who are our most vulnerable and at-risk children and young people. The principles set out below is helpful in planning and carrying out face to face/ or virtual activities based on risk assessments. Our planning to 'return to normal' taking Government and Public Health information into account now reflects a phased approach that will come into effect as of 7th of September 2020.

Aims:

- To help all workers undertaking visits or contact with children to keep safe and reduce risk of infection while undertaking key responsibilities.
- To reduce the risk of infection to others by staff entering homes
- To enable the workforce to undertake key duties

Please note: Key changes and updates;

All CIN, CP and CLA cases now require a face to face visit.

Where there are mitigating factors relating to health that may prevent you from a face to face visit professional judgement should be used.

All visits should be considered with your managers oversight, the requirement and determination for a to face to face visit and in line with [Government guidance](#).

Prior to any visits the following should be undertaken

Where possible contact should be made with the family beforehand (by text or telephone) to explore whether someone in the household has been impacted by COVID-19 and whether it's safe to undertake the visit; unless by doing so the contact will place the child at increased risk.

The risk assessment for face to face visits must include the recommended physical distance of 2 meter, unless a face mask is worn.

Face masks must:

- cover both nose and mouth
- not be allowed to dangle around the neck
- not be touched once put on, except when carefully removed before disposal
- be changed when they become moist or damaged
- be worn once and then discarded - hands must be cleaned after disposal

Workers and their managers need to identify:

- Is the family reporting Covid symptoms? Advise the person who is ill to seek advice from 111.
- Who will be present in the room/ household?
- Plan entry and use of the space in the home – or remain at the door. Workers need to maintain social distancing throughout
- Workers and their managers must consider confidentiality.

A management comment should be added to capture this decision and will need to be recorded on a case note selecting 'Covid health risk' as it must now cover how health risk will be managed during the face to face visit and why a Face to face visit is now required.

Undertaking Visits

- When visiting families and entering their house the worker should ask if they can wash their hands, or use sanitiser, so families can be reassured that we are following public health guidance. Workers should familiarise themselves with current health advice on steps around handwashing. Workers may choose to take their own paper towels with them
- Workers should avoid physical contact with family members and children and follow current public health guidance around distancing from families
- Any face to face contact or visits with children and families can be undertaken in line with the analysis of health risk to ensure staff can keep safe. This means workers need to apply professional judgement and can be creative where appropriate or required to enable a face to face visit to take place. This could include in the garden, at the door etc.
- Care should be taken to avoid contact with surfaces wherever possible and if this cannot be avoided, workers are encouraged to wash their hands as soon after as possible
- Workers should keep up to date with Public Health advice and follow any recommended steps around social distancing, for example, keeping the length of a visit to a minimum
- When visiting (or virtual), the worker should explore with the family around whether they have sufficient means to feed their children and how they can be supported with this, including any local resources, access to school meal vouchers etc. The worker should have an explicit conversation with family regarding safety planning whilst self-isolating or if children are home from school for an extended period
- In all cases, it is important to record visits ASAP in case the worker goes off sick.

Where face to face visits cannot be undertaken for children and young people this must be escalated to a **Service Lead/ Group Manager** unless risk can be mitigated.

Carers or children in foster care who are reporting and symptoms/ self-isolating

When foster carers report themselves / or children in their care experiencing symptoms or are self-isolating. Advise the carer who is ill to seek advice from 111. Workers are to report this to their manager and maintain frequency of calls to support the carer and the child. The worker should update the IRO.

There are 2 types of visits that Social Worker can record on Mosaic:

- **Visit – Statutory visit** (Child Seen face to face or seen virtual)
[On the Mosaic visit template](#)
- **Visit – Non-Social Worker visit** (e.g. other professional/ agency have seen the child, virtually or otherwise)

As a case note on Mosaic – use Non-Social Worker visit

Management Oversight

Management oversight should be used to regularly review and ensure our children and young people are seen and assessed as appropriate.

During supervision, managers should support their staff to think creatively as to how children can be seen, and risks mitigated. This should be captured in the record of supervision on the child's files where risk is fully considered, and clear decision making is fully captured.

| Review / Contacts / References | |
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| Document title: | Response to Covid 19 Practice Guidance on RAG Rating, Visiting and Recording |
| Date approved: | 28 August 2020 |
| Approving body: | |
| Last review date: | 15 July 2020 |
| Revision history: | |
| Next review date: | |
| Related internal policies, procedures, guidance: | |
| Document owner: | Louise Warren |
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