**Children First:**

Dedicated Schools Team Practice Guidance

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12. **Introduction**
    1. The Early Help Service within West Sussex is committed to providing a consistent and accessible family focused service for children, young people and their families. Through its supporting family’s approach to earliest help Early Help aims to ensure that children’s needs are met as early as possible, supporting families to resolve issues before they become harder to reverse. Early Help is able to achieve this through its work with a range of partners, with Schools being critical in identifying early indicators where children, young people and families may benefit from additional support.
    2. Where the term “school” is used in this document, this should be taken to include primary, secondary and tertiary educational provision. The dedicated school teams will support all schools, FE Colleges and the Alternative Provision Colleges (APCs).

1.3 This document is for Family Support Workers (FSW) and Team Managers (TM) within the Dedicated Schools Team (DST). It sets out the practice expected of those working with schools and covers the range of ways the DST can support and work alongside schools. The aim the DST is to support partners and schools to deliver earliest help with a view to reducing the number of families meeting the threshold for Early Help Service and Social Care intervention. This will be achieved by being committed to working collaboratively with our school colleagues, to deliver timely early intervention and being adaptable to new and emerging themes that create challenges for schools and their pupils.

1.4 The DST can support schools to identify the best way forward for children and families with slightly more complex needs, where further targeted intervention and support is required. Support to the school can include providing advice and signposting to the most relevant support services and partners, to build confidence referring to appropriate agencies.

1.5 The DST will complete short pieces of work that do not reach Level 3 on the continuum of need. Intervention or support can be completed with parents and or children/young people as identified by the school and their link worker.

1. **KEY AREAS OF SUPPORT**

2.1The function of the DST is to be responsive to need and help schools to navigate any new and emerging issues, however, there are some key areas of support which have been broken down into 6 areas which will guide schools and DST identify early indicators that a child, young person or family may require further support.

2.2 The 6 key areas:

* Attendance (including fixed term exclusions, Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA), pupils at risk of permanent exclusion (PEX))
* Physical Health, Mental Health and Emotional Well being
* Neglect
* Transition – Managed moves, in year applications, transitions between setting and school and primary to secondary and secondary to tertiary
* Targeted Intervention and Support
* SEND

2.3 **Attendance**

As part of the WSCC wider ‘Attendance Support team’ the schools link worker will be discussing any children that are below 90% attendance. This will include reviewing attendance and absence data to support the school identify pupils or cohorts requiring support with attendance. The link worker will support the school intervening as early as possible and agreeing an action plan for pupils with high levels of absence and those demonstrating growing disengagement with school.

They will work together to understand why a pupil may be at risk of a pupil entitlement investigation (PEI) referral or fixed penalty notice (FPN). Support the school where a meeting is needed with a pupil and parent/carer around risk of PEX or return to school/reintegration into school following fixed term exclusion.

Support schools with the use of the Emotionally Based School Avoidance tools ensuring there is support with children/young people at the earliest opportunity. The schools link worker will understand the school’s attendance policies.

2.4 **Physical Health, Mental Health and Emotional Well-being**

Provide information, advice and guidance on emerging emotional health and wellbeing challenges where Youth Emotional Service (YES) or CAMHS/CDC threshold is not met.

This can include new national and local information, training and resources and signposting to appropriate local services. Where appropriate this may include.

* Facilitating multi-disciplinary meetings for families with complex needs.
* Facilitate young people accessing the Find It Out offer locally.
* Be available to meet with students within school with consent and if appropriate to do so to discuss worries directly.
* Support and chair school meetings where there are concerns around health and wellbeing.

2.5 **Neglect**

Link workers will be confident to support school staff to recognise the indicators of neglect at the earliest opportunity. Will support schools to respond appropriately to neglect ensuring that children and families have their needs met in a timely manner to prevent neglect from escalating. To highlight and guide school staff to apply the neglect toolkit outlined in the WSCPP West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership neglect strategy to recognise and respond to neglect appropriately. To support schools to lead on Early Help Plans where neglect is identified to meet level 2 on the neglect matrix (included in the strategy)  <https://www.westsussexscp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Neglect-Strategy-Populated-FINAL-PDF.pdf>

Support schools to use the relevant neglect tools such as Day in My Life (DIML), share new resources and strategies to support schools to capture the lived experience of children where there is a concern of neglect. Support school staff with difficult conversations and Team Around the Family (TAF) meetings with families, or a professional’s discussion without the family if required. Complete home visits, where appropriate with school staff, this may include welfare checks. Support schools to identify children affected by neglect that require an IFD referral.

2.6 **Transitions**

We are aware that changes between educational settings can be very daunting for some children and young people. There is an expectation that the link workers will work with schools to identify children and young people transitioning between educational settings who will require additional support. This will include discussion with Early Years and Childcare Advisers, link workers for other schools and lead workers for families with targeted support. Where there is a risk of NEET this will include support with education and other professionals such as careers advisors. Additional support may include SEN needs, children that have struggled with a school environment or who have needed extensive additional support within the previous setting/school for some reason. This will also include children who are enrolling in school from elective home education if support is needed. There will be a targeted focus around transition points for example setting to primary, primary to secondary, secondary to college. Link workers will work with schools to understand the educational support already in place around these critical times and where additional support for a pupil would be beneficial. Local focus will be ensuring link workers working with feeder schools into secondary schools communicate effectively around those who would need additional support.

2.7 **Targeted Intervention and Support**

Support schools to identify the best way forward for children and families with slightly more complex needs, where further targeted intervention and support is required. Support to the school can include providing advice and signposting to the most relevant support services and partners, supporting schools to build confidence referring to appropriate agencies.

For children, young people and families featuring any of the following features then a more targeted level of support maybe required, which could be led by the school or another partner or service. Link workers can support schools with how to complete relevant referrals, which can include referral to the IFD with the appropriate consent from parent/carer.

* Multiple complex issues that impact on the children and family stability
* Entrenched or inter-generational patterns of behaviour
* Issues that affect the whole family
* A history of children social care (CSC) intervention or police involvement
* A coordinated multiagency approach is required
* Risk of escalating to level 4 intervention including risk of family breakdown
* Adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion and young people at risk of worklessness.
* Children who have not been attending school regularly
* Parents and children involved in crime and anti-social behaviour
* Parents and children with a range of health problems
* Families affected by domestic violence and abuse

2.8 **SEND**

Provide information for schools with relevant supporting services and support groups for families experiencing challenges due to SEND. To promote the school’s use of the ‘Ordinarily Available Inclusive Practice’ (OAIP) guide and Therapeutic Thinking approach. Link workers should be aware of children on education and health care plans (EHCP’s) or where an education and health care needs assessment (EHCNA) is currently being completed and support the school where appropriate.

1. **SCHOOL LINK WORKERS**
   1. All schools within West Sussex will be provided with a link worker from the DST which can be a Family Support Worker or Team Manager. There will be a secondary link worker identified for all schools to ensure there is support available at all times during the working week. Named link workers will be provided to Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, APC’s, FE Colleges, Specialist Schools and Independent Schools.
   2. Allocation of link workers for schools will be agreed on a local level by Hubs apart from APCs which will be agreed by all at a county level by the DST TMs to ensure there is an equitable split across the teams and the APC is adequately supported.
   3. Link Workers will not be assigned to schools where their own children attend.
   4. Hub DST teams will identify schools that require enhanced support, criteria for this can include schools that are not engaging with Early Help, schools that are either leading on a high number of EHPs or no EHPs, high numbers of exclusions or other local needs such as areas of deprivation.
   5. DST Team Managers will support link workers to ensure that there is a timely response to a request for support. They can provide additional support within a school in situations such as poor engagement with Early Help, an increased need or crisis point has been identified.
   6. Link workers will follow GDPR policy and must only look up children/young people on WSCC systems when there is an identified and appropriate reason to do so.
2. **EARLY HELP CONSULTATIONS (EHC)**

4.1 Can be requested at any time by the school, there is no minimum or maximum number of EHCs that can be held, however there is an expectation that there should be a continuous effort to engage with all schools.

4.2 Key members of school staff that should be included in an EHC are the schools DSL, pastoral leads and SENCOs, headteachers may want to attend these meetings. This should be agreed with each school and the headteacher and the DSL should be informed when an EHC has been completed and who from the school attended and the notes of the discussions shared with the attendees and the headteacher and DSL for storage on the relevant in-school recording system.

4.3 The aims of EHCs are to build relationships with school, particularly where that the relationship is not well established, to encourage identification and helping children as early as possible. Updating schools with changes and information on the local area, to discuss children of concern and identify potential children that may require further support using the 6 key areas for discussion.

4.4 DST Team managers will monitor the take up of support by schools and will adjust focus for support where appropriate.

4.5 On a termly basis the EHC will include representation from the 5-19 School Nurse Team. Invites to this meeting will be sent to the duty inbox for the relevant East, West and Central team.

[sc-tr.eastschoolnursing@nhs.net](mailto:sc-tr.eastschoolnursing@nhs.net)

[Sc-tr.westschoolnursing@nhs.net](mailto:Sc-tr.westschoolnursing@nhs.net)

[sc-tr.centralschoolnursing@nhs.net](mailto:sc-tr.centralschoolnursing@nhs.net)

1. **PRESENCE IN SCHOOLS**

5.1 FSWs and TMs are encouraged where possible to work from a school site, enabling a visual and practical presence in school. This can support schools that have a high level of need or where there is a requirement to build relationships with the school and its staff team. The type and frequency of the physical presence is to be decided by the DST TM and the local leadership team.

5.2 Where there is an increased need or incident within a school that requires a crisis response, the DST Team Manager or Service Manager will be available to support or contribute to the local authority’s response to the school. And will consider if additional resourcing of support services including FSWs is required.

1. **Short Intervention**

6.1 Direct work with children/young people/families will be with appropriate consent gained by the school prior to the work being carried out by DST, schools are responsible for recording consent on their own school recording system.

6.2 Short Intervention can include.

* Support while a family are awaiting allocation for a lead worker, such as supporting a family’s engagement with the school, signposting where appropriate, facilitating a TAF or organising a professionals meeting, or direct intervention if the outcome means that a level 3 response is no longer required, and the Early Help plan can be closed.
* Direct intervention sessions with either a parent/carer, child or young person. This can be for intervention where a Level 3 response is not required, and intervention would prevent the requirement for a Level 3 response.

1. **EARLY HELP PLANS**

7.1 All DST FSWs will be required to hold and lead on Level 3 EHPs, this is to ensure FSWs are up to date with practice and remain upskilled so they can work as flexibly as required by the Early Help Service. It is expected that this would not routinely exceed 2 plans unless the Early Help Service Continuity Plan dictates otherwise. Allocations will be completed as part of weekly allocations meeting, DST FSWs to follow the Supporting Families Practice Guidance for these plans.

1. **Integrated front door and Duty**

8.1 When schools contact the IFD to discuss a family and it is deemed to not reach Level 3 on the continuum of need the school will be encouraged to discuss the child/young person with their DST link worker. The link worker will be informed of this discussion.

* 1. IFD will contact link workers when a short piece of intervention is recommended which would prevent the need for a level 3 response, all requests will copy in the DST TM.
  2. Hub duty TM may identify short pieces of intervention which are best suited to a DST FSW, this will be send to DST TM for allocation.

1. **PANELS**

9.1 DST team managers will attend Pupil Placement and Behavioural Panels, ensuring relationships with schools is maintained and that they are able to identify key trends and themes. The Pupil Placement Panel meet in each of the 4 areas 4 weekly during term time to discuss applications for pupils meeting Fair Access criteria who have been unable to be placed via the usual admissions process. The Behaviour Forum/Pastoral Network meetings are school led meetings held in each area partnership to discuss strategic matters within localities.

9.2 Other local panels where appropriate can be represented by a DST FSW or TM, decisions regarding attendance will be made locally by the DST TM.

1. **Escalation**

10.1 If school professionals have safeguarding concerns regarding a child/young person, they should follow their school’s safeguarding policy and refer to the Integrated Front Door. The DST can provide advice and support for schools in making referrals, but it is the responsibility of the school to complete the referral. Guidance from the DST can include signposting to useful documentation to support the referral such as chronologies, information stored on the schools Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS), details of direct work or home visits and cross-referencing against the continuum of need threshold document.

Where a child/young person is at risk or in danger, action should not be slowed by any support from the DST. Schools should be aware to follow pan Sussex guidance in relation to safeguarding concerns.

[Making a Referral - (westsussexscp.org.uk)](https://www.westsussexscp.org.uk/professionals/working-together/making-a-referral)

<https://www.westsussexscp.org.uk/report-a-concern-about-a-child>

10.2 Safeguarding children is everyone’s responsibility and Early Help takes very seriously its responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. The Safeguarding policy sets out how we will deliver this commitment by working together and ensuring robust arrangements are in place to identify, assess and support those children and young people who are suffering, or at risk of suffering harm. This Safeguarding Policy is fully in line with the Pan Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures. If you think a child or young person is at **immediate risk of harm**, you must treat this as an emergency and call 999 to report your concerns to the Police immediately.

10.3 If you have any Child Protection or Safeguarding concerns, in the first instance discuss these concerns with a manager and review against the continuum of need to establish if a referral to CSC is required. All Child Protection issues must be brought to the attention of management as soon as possible and, in most cases this should be immediately. In no circumstances should this be longer than 24 hours. If you have doubts about making a referral and are unable to consult your own line manager another manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead for further advice or Emergency Duty Team (EDT) if out of hours.

10.4 Early Help staff must ensure that they have a good understanding and awareness of Adult Safeguarding and know what to do if they have a concern. Adult Safeguarding means protecting an adult’s right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is about working together to support people to make decisions about the risks they face in their own lives and protecting those who lack the mental capacity to make those decisions.

<https://sussexsafeguardingadults.procedures.org.uk/ykoss/sussex-safeguarding-adults-policy/sussex-safeguarding-adults-policy>

10.5 If you think a crime is in progress or life is at risk, contact the emergency services on 999 to report your concerns to the Police immediately. If you have any Adult Safeguarding concerns, in the first instance discuss these with your line manager to establish if a referral to Adult Services is required. All Adult Safeguarding issues need to be brought to the attention of management as soon as possible, in most cases this should be immediately. In no circumstances should this be longer than 24 hours. If you have doubts about making a referral and are unable to consult your own line manager, seek the advice of any Integrated Leadership Team member.

1. **RECORDING**

11.1 Any direct work that is carried out with children/young people/families either on site at school or at their home address will be recorded by the link worker and their notes will be given to the school for them to attach to their own safeguarding systems such as CPOMS.

11.2 For Families already on an EHP any support provided by the DST will be recorded as case notes on Mosaic. The case note should detail the intervention/support provided, with which child/parent, analysis of the intervention, any actions required, by whom and when to be completed.

11.3 Where Children and Young People are open to Children’s Social Care the work will be recorded on mosaic and shared with the allocated social worker. Work will be recorded as a case note on the individual child’s record. The information sent to the social worker should detail the intervention/support provided, with which child/parent, analysis of the intervention, any actions required, by whom and when to be completed.

11.4 Where support is provided in regard to a child that is not open to CSC, on an EHP or EF/YPP/FIO an entry will be recorded on CED (Impulse) on the child’s record which states that the schools link worker has supported school with advice. Childs records on CED are not to be amended, recording a note only is permitted. See Guidance on recording on CED - [\\teamspace.westsussex.gov.uk\DavWWWRoot\teams\TT\IPEHAll\Procedures\Dedicated schools team\Recording Dedicated Schools Team Work.docx](file:///\\teamspace.westsussex.gov.uk\DavWWWRoot\teams\TT\IPEHAll\Procedures\Dedicated%20schools%20team\Recording%20Dedicated%20Schools%20Team%20Work.docx)

11.5 The numbers of EHCs will not be reported on and there is no minimum or maximum of EHCs that can be carried out with a school. This can be a formal structured meeting or ad hoc advice and guidance.

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