

## **COVID-19 Safeguarding Statement from the Chair of the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Executive (GSCE)**

6<sup>th</sup> April 2020



Dear colleagues

I am writing to let you know of the arrangements for GSCE business in response to Covid-19, acknowledging that some strategic partnership work may need to be put aside to enable frontline services to focus on operational concerns.

Whilst GSCE does not play a leading role in the coordination of the county response to Covid-19 it retains a statutory duty to ensure children are kept safe through multi agency working. Child safeguarding will therefore be a key feature within our business continuity planning in order to understand and mitigate any possible impact on safeguarding children that the current situation may cause.

It is vital that the partnership maintains good communications through this time and adheres to existing Multi Agency arrangements. Where this is not possible alternative mechanisms should be implemented with the collective agreement of the partnership and with a full understanding of the impact on the lived experience of the child.

Whilst the Government has relaxed some arrangements such as Ofsted and CQC inspections, they have issued guidance which confirms that key safeguarding functions (such as SIN notifications) must remain within current timescales but they have relaxed others (such as 15 days to conduct a rapid review). In light of that guidance our proposals are as follows.

### **Key meetings - GSCE, Delivery Board and Sub Groups.**

We have postponed the GSCE Delivery Board, Subgroup and the main GSCE Meetings for the time being whilst continuing to conduct business through non face to face media. This is whilst we determine the best medium to support virtual meetings. This is a specific challenge as each agency is using a different platform to conduct their own 'virtual meetings'. I will update you further in due course.

### **Rapid Reviews, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Serious Case Reviews**

We will continue to progress the current serious case reviews via email and phone conferencing although we recognise that this will be dependent on key staff being available to input at key stages. We will conduct the next two Rapid Reviews through a 'virtual meeting' within the statutory timescales in the first instance. Should this prove difficult then we will amend timescales in line with the recent flexibility contained in the DfE note.

Completed SCRs will where appropriate be published but publication dates may be revised in line with the DfE guidance.

### **Multi agency auditing and other QA activity**

We will explore the feasibility of conducting this business 'virtually' in order to maintain momentum in assuring ourselves of the effective working of the partnership.

### **Child Death Reviews**

It is vital that Child Death Reviews (CDR) continue to progress during this time; these will be conducted virtually recognising this will need key staff to be available to input in a timely manner. The Gloucestershire CDR process reports directly to the Nationally National Child Mortality Database (NCMD) who are capturing information at a national level. It remains important that information is collected for all child deaths as the

NCMD is monitoring the impact of the virus on child mortality in real time, with 7 day a week surveillance in place. This information is then reported to Public Health England and NHS England.

NCMD has confirmed that as of Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April a new enhanced notification form with COVID-19 specific questions will be deployed and it is vital that colleagues respond with as much information as possible to these new COVID-19 specific questions when notifying of a child death. Colleagues should continue to notify child deaths through the eCDOP portal <https://www.ecdop.co.uk/CMAU/Live/public>

### **LADO / Allegations management**

The Allegations Management Process is still functioning within a virtual environment so please maintain your agencies momentum in engagement as directed by the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO). To make a referral to the LADO please follow this link <https://qes-online.com/Gloucestershire/eLADO/Live#!/Public>. All other communication with the LADO should be via [amadmin@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:amadmin@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

### **Multi Agency training**

We have cancelled all multi-agency safeguarding training until end of May 2020. Emails have been sent to staff booked on to courses that were scheduled for this period and the website will be updated regards information about our plans for resuming training once it is safe to do so. We are looking to implement eLearning packages as a temporary solution to fill the gap left by the cessation of Multi Agency Training, again the website and Newsletter will detail the arrangements once they are in place.

The DfE and Ofsted have relaxed arrangements in place ensuring Designated Safeguarding Leads be 'up to date' with certificated training during this time. There is no need for education establishments or other organisations and agencies to look for alternative training during this time. The GSCE will be providing suitable training options in the near future.

The GSCE Safeguarding Support Unit is working with the GSAB on free short accessible training solutions for volunteers that may be deployed into the community. Details will be made available through the GSCE Newsletter and Alert System.

### **Information sharing**

Please note that the GSCE Safeguarding Support Unit are able to support partners in sharing information about how services are adapting to the crisis, specifically in relation to their safeguarding arrangements, through our circulation lists, GSCE Newsletter and Alert system as well as our website. If you would like to make use of that facility please do contact the team via [GSCE@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:GSCE@gloucestershire.gov.uk). The Safeguarding in Education Team are continuing to support schools within Gloucestershire and can be contacted by email [gsep@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:gsep@gloucestershire.gov.uk).

We will be reviewing these arrangements at the end of April and will provide a further update then

Marion Andrews Evans  
Chair Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Executive  
Executive Nurse Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group