

**Oxfordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA)**

**Executive Group Briefing – April 2020**

Dear all,

As you are all aware, the current situation is a challenge to all of our organisations and there will have to be significant changes to the way we work and deliver our services, in particular Statutory Safeguarding duties and responsibilities to safeguard children in Oxfordshire.

We wanted to provide you with details of the interim arrangements we are all putting in place. This briefing note is based on current circumstances and arrangements, you will appreciate that this will inevitably be subject to change over the coming weeks.

Partnership working is vital during this current time and multi-agency safeguarding arrangements will continue as usual, however agencies are to be mindful that this may be undertaken in a different way whilst trying to avoid as much face to face contact as possible.

**Senior Leaders within Oxfordshire County Council will continue to review child circumstances and have implemented the following:**

* Prioritising children and families based on situation/circumstances etc, and signposting those who do not have support networks around them to various community and voluntary sector groups where possible.
* Moving to more agile working.
* Carrying out multi-agency Strategy Meetings, Initial Child Protection Conferences, Review Child Protection Conferences, Core Groups and Looked After Reviews for children using virtual platforms or telephone conference and are working with partners to manage this.
* Where face to face contact is required for all visits, telephoning in advance to clarify it is still safe to visit and taking precautionary measures to ensure the safety of the family and the worker.
* Requesting wherever possible that colleagues across partner agencies proactively share information about families who they know are self-isolating, to avoid any unnecessary home visits and contact, ensuring all are protected from unnecessary exposure to the virus.
* Continually reassess risk and reprioritise work across the partnership to ensure we all continue to provide a safeguarding service to those children and families who are most at risk.

**Senior Leaders across Health organisations have implemented the following:**

* All health partners have business continuity plans which identify Safeguarding Children and Adults and Children who are Looked After as key priority areas.
* All services and teams are working with the government social distancing guidance as far as possible but retain and maintain a clinical service for all patients requiring urgent or necessary health care.
* It is important that families continue to seek health care advice and support in their usual manner to ensure children’s health needs are met in a timely manner.
* GPs will be maintaining primary care health and maintaining their safeguarding duties supported by the CCG teams.
* The 0-19 service will continue to prioritise safeguarding. Contact with families requiring support and health input will be maintained based on needs and risk assessments. Professional responsibilities and meetings will be supported virtually to maintain representation.
* Community Paediatrics at the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust will maintain a clinical service to support families
* Looked After Children’s (LAC) Health Assessments are a statutory duty and will continue to be delivered. However, changes for Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) are required in order to deliver assessments safely to patients and protect staff in a timely manner as possible.
* Referrals for paediatric assessment will follow the same pathway of care although children may be assessed in different settings to minimise infection risks as per Public Health England and Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health guidance.
* Work with our partners to ensure that children who may have experienced abuse or neglect are appropriately and holistically assessed in a timely manner.
* Mental health support for those in crisis will still be available through the usual referral routes.
* The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Safeguarding Team are continuing to contribute to all the local partnership work to ensure safeguarding remains a priority.
* The CCG and Health partners have established mechanisms for regular information sharing for any concerns.
* Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust (OHFT) and Oxford University Hospitals NHS trust safeguarding teams will maintain consultation services and support the MASH. Action is being taken to ensure this will be maintained if there is a reduction in capacity.
* All health partners will remain engaged in multiagency discussions including Channel, MARAC and MAPPA as needed.

**Thames Valley Police (TVP) have implemented the following:**

* Developed business continuity plans which involve a tiered response to demand and resourcing levels. Overall, the plan aims to ensure at times of highest demand, business critical functions such as dealing with 999 calls, responding to the most serious incidents and investigating the most serious crimes continue. This is a flexible model which may change daily or even hourly.
* A strong commitment by TVP to maintain safeguarding children and vulnerable adults as a priority. This includes prioritising investigations where there are imminent risks of harm. As resources become more challenged, it is likely that investigators and supervisors will be pooled so that partners may not always be dealing with teams with which they have become familiar.
* Contingency plans include continued information and decision making and safety planning, working within the MASH, continuing with MARAC, MAPPA, the management of Registered Sex Offenders and providing services for victims. Work in each of these areas will be prioritised in line with levels of risk and harm.
* More detailed plans are being developed to adapt how we work with health colleagues, HM Coroner and other agencies in dealing with sudden and unexpected deaths of both adults and children.
* In relation to recent announcements from the Prime Minister, regarding minimising social gathering and restricting movement, TVP is working with the Government to consider how these rules can most effectively be enforced and will seek to work closely with our communities to ensure that people know what is expected of them. Officers will be continuing respond to emergencies and deal with serious crime.

Wherever possible and given the priorities outlined above, we are requesting all agencies to share information about visits to children and their families to minimise the number of agencies visiting the same families in a short time period and ask that these arrangements are managed locally within exiting multi agency arrangements. This may be through existing MASH processes to check and share relevant information. All professionals can then record this visit and the outcome on their agency records to provide some assurance that the child and/or family have been seen or visited.

We are managing non-urgent partnership meetings by conference facility (sub-groups, task and finish groups etc.) and we are postponing all OSCB multi-agency training sessions for the foreseeable time. We have issued temporary guidance on training that is/will be available electronically and are also exploring options for webinar training. We will conduct as much of the business as is feasible via e-mail or conference facility where possible.

The OSCB Business Unit are contactable on the usual telephone numbers and e-mail addresses (details shown below). Staff are working from home in line with national directives.

We can assure you that we are all working closely together to get through this and will continue to review our contingency plans and staffing capacity and will keep you updated. In the meantime, we would like to thank you all for the work and support you are providing to support our children and their families during this very challenging time.

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive, Oxfordshire County Council

Timothy De Meyer, Assistant Chief Constable, Thames Valley Police

Sula Wiltshire, Director of Quality and Nursing, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group

Richard Simpson, Independent Chair, Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board

Statutory Safeguarding Partners for Oxfordshire

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