

COVID-19 CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP GROUP

ACTION PLAN: FEBRUARY TO APRIL 2021

The Covid-19 Children and Families Collective Leadership Group brings together national and local government and other partners across children and family services; health; education; justice; and the third sector to take urgent action to support children, young people and families in vulnerable situations during the pandemic.

The Leadership Group has reviewed data and intelligence from a wide range of sources, including feedback from children, young people and families themselves, to identify the most pressing concerns and the action required to immediately address them.

This plan outlines the short-term actions being taken in the following areas:

- Access to services
- Child Protection Awareness
- Workforce Resilience
- Domestic Abuse
- Respite Care
- Early Years/Under Fives
- Care Leavers
- Children's Hearings Systems
- Substance Misuse and Mental Health interface with adult services

The plan is linked to the broader cross-cutting issues of mental health and well-being; poverty policy initiatives; and family support. It is underpinned by engagement with and feedback from children, young people and families.

Work will be mainly taken forward by dedicated sub-groups of specialist teams and organisations. This will ensure that, although the action plan is focused on delivering immediate support over the next three months, it will be aligned with medium and longer term objectives to support children's and family services.

Covid-19 Children and Families Collective Leadership Group - Workstreams / Areas of Focus for February- April 2021

No	Issue	Description
1	Access	We know from PHS CYRES survey that families report significant issues in accessing support. Localities are asked to establish family helplines which can deal with requests for assistance & ensure appropriate support is delivered. This may already exist in some areas, others will have infrastructure in place which can be rebranded or adapted. The importance of the GIRFEC approach and the clear point of contact that the Named Person service provides is a consistent access point for services to children and young people who may be in vulnerable situations.
2	Child Protection awareness	Police Scotland, SCRA and SWS reporting concerns of increased volume of referrals relating of online child abuse and exploitation. Police Scotland leading the development of a public awareness campaign, in partnership with Government, Third Sector and COSLA.
3	Workforce resilience	We are aware of concerns regarding the capacity of the current workforce for children and young people. It is possible that some parts of the workforce will be redeployed (particularly within Health). We also know that local areas are beginning to experience higher levels of absence, self-isolating and are impacted by child care arrangements. There is an urgent need to: 1) ensure at local level there are mutual aid arrangements across the children's sector (health, social work, third sector, youth work) and between local authority areas. 2) ensure links are made to workforce resilience resources 3) have national coordination around workforce shortages if required – working with SSSC to identify additional capacity as required. 4) ensure deployment of clinical staff is done so in consultation and agreement with professional leadership and not a general management only decision. 5) advise that staffing capacity, decisions around deployment of clinical staff are documented & reported via local & NHS Board CG groups highlighting areas of risk.
4	Domestic Abuse	We know from our current data & discussion with DA agencies that many children were directly affected by domestic abuse during first lockdown. We need to take urgent action to mitigate the impact within the current situation including links to Housing services.
5	Respite Care	We are very aware that the first lockdown had a profound impact on children and young people with disabilities. We need to mitigate the impact of the current situation by: 1) ensuring respite care, short breaks, respite foster care continue as long as it is safe to do so 2) work in tandem with the CERG ASL & Mental Health working group.
6	Early years/ Under fives	Whilst quite rightly there is a major focus on schools the LG recognised that many children living in vulnerable situations were aged under 5 years. We should: 1) ensure proportionate support to families with babies and very young children with additional needs, whilst retaining early contacts and core reviews for all families through universal and targeted home visiting services

		<p>2) work in tandem with ELC around the 2-5 year olds to support immediate health and wellbeing needs, including supporting the home learning environment, parent information and importance of play.</p> <p>3) embed specialist training for perinatal and infant mental health and improve pathways of care (to more specialist services) – work in tandem with PNIMH PB</p> <p>4) drive improvement to reduce impact of poverty on individual families e.g. income maximisation, food poverty.</p>
7	Care leavers	We know that care leavers continue experienced difficulties in the first lockdown and are monitoring a possible increase in those dying from suicide and /or overdose. Some of the key areas of focus include the prevention of deaths from suicide and /or alcohol / drug misuse; transitions out of care; Corporate Parenting responsibilities (e.g. college and uni students etc); the winter support package; and liaison with key organisations such as STAF & WC?S to identify other areas for priority action.
8	Children’s Hearings System	We have established a CHS Recovery group - this group will now need to work to maximise the functioning of the Hearing system within the current restrictions and recalibrate the work towards recovery.
9	Substance Misuse and Mental Health interface with adult services	We know that most of the children living in vulnerable situations or already on the CP Register are there because their parents have substance misuse problems or mental health difficulties. We need to work with colleagues in adult services to ensure service delivery continues or to take mitigating action.
10	Involvement and Feedback from children & young people	<p>The C& F Advisory group works across representative organisations to offer advice to the C&F LG. We need feedback from the AG in relation to proposals for action.</p> <p>As an immediate, discrete strand of work, a consortium of stakeholders will facilitate focus groups with vulnerable children, young people and parents/carers from the end of January until March to obtain direct feedback on their lived experience of the pandemic and a clearer understanding of their needs. Analysis of which will inform key themes which will be further explored via a series of ‘policy workshops’ which will seek to better understand CYPF ideas for solutions and suggested LG action. Although the final report from this work is not anticipated to be ready until May, information from each focus group will be made available to LG at the earliest opportunity. This includes opportunities for individual LG members to attend some of the focus groups subject to confirmation with those involved.</p> <p>The Scottish Youth Parliament, Young Scot and YouthLink Scotland in partnership have delivered two waves of “<i>Lockdown Lowdown</i>”, an online survey. A demographic breakdown of Wave 2 survey will be available in early February. The second wave also included focus groups with vulnerable cohorts of children and young people to help identify the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of children and young people. Results and analysis of which were made available in December.</p> <p>Wave 3 of the Lockdown Lowdown survey will be launched in early Spring with a view to provide comparable data, and support policy development as we work towards a recovery phase.</p>
11	Cross cutting themes / groups	1. Mental health and well-being – discussion has taken place with policy colleagues across SG and LG session took place on 25 th February.

		<ol style="list-style-type: none">2. Poverty policy initiatives & implementation during lockdown – discussion with colleagues in SG and update for LG took place on 11th February.3. Family Support – discussion between C&F and Learning colleagues and agreement to link FSDG sub of LG to CERG family support work stream – LG kept updated including at meeting on 11 February.
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