

# Children's Services Response to Covid 19 Pandemic

Scrutiny Committee Briefing: 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2020

# Overview

Children's Services team have been focussed on a range of key challenge and roles

- Ensuring immediate safety
- Maintaining critical service provision
- System Leadership — in particular in relation to education, safeguarding and community support
- Keeping eyes and ears on children
- Managing a complex market
- Supporting our staff teams
- Communication at an unprecedented scale
- Planning for the less obvious and longer term impacts on children and families

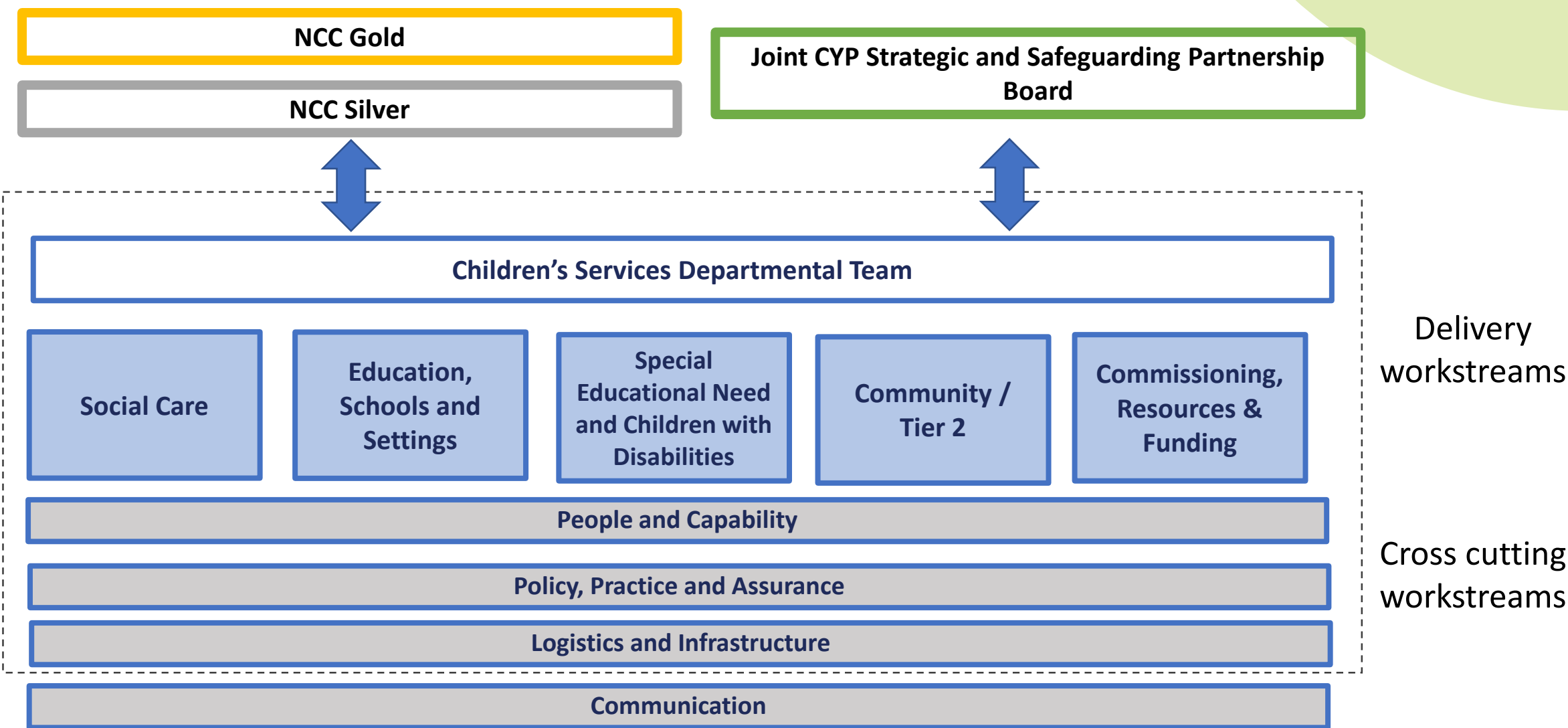
# Key Issues & Risks

- Much of universal system of support to children and families is closed down in part or in full
- Many opportunities for identification of need and risk are no longer there
- The stability and safety normally created for children and families by schools, community support and other universal services has been much diminished
- Education provision open to some but not all – coordination and communication necessary throughout
- The usual referral pathways and professional relationships are disrupted
- Statutory and higher tier services do largely remain in place but can only deliver remotely and in many cases there have been significant drops in referrals
- Even where we do have children known to us – the effectiveness of support will be constrained by the need to try to tackle complex needs and risk remotely and with stretched resources

**Overall there are simply far fewer eyes and ears on children and young people in Norfolk**

# Children’s Service Response to Covid 19 – Initial Phase

Clear management structure in place. Partner and system representation on all delivery workstreams and brought together strategically via the CYP strategic and Safeguarding Partnership Boards which have merged together during crisis.



**COVID 19**

**Children's Social  
Care**

# Social Care: Focus and Challenges

- How to deliver a relationship-based service in a socially distanced context?
- When is it right to still see families face to face? – what is the right balance of public health and child protection risks?
- How can we enable complex processes such as a protection conference remotely – what technology and skills do we need?
- How can we keep in close contact with children and families?
- How does lockdown impact on our risk analysis of each case – what new threats does it create?
- Will there be enough staff to deliver services? What is our contingency plan for each case and each team?
- How can we encourage and facilitate as many children as possible to be in school?
- What can we do about the fact that fewer professionals are out there identifying risk and referring to us?

# Social Care: Response

- Staff availability has been high and stable
- Risk-based approach – reviewed and risk assessed all 3000+ open cases
- Support to highest risk cases has continued face to face with no relaxation of frequency / quality
- Stepping up other means of contact with families and increasing use of family networks and family network meetings
- Keeping cases open longer in social work and Family Support Team where the support identified in the step down plan is not sufficient
- CADS has continued to operate and expand its offer supporting publicity campaigns and new text service, launching dedicated 7/7 phoneline for children and young people
- Production of Covid 19 specific Practice Guidance and accompanying range of Quick Guides ahead of national guidance and shared regionally
- Guidance training and coaching for staff in delivering remotely – child protection conferences, LAC reviews, supervision contact , support visits all now being delivered via technology
- Weekly conversations at the Multi Agency Safeguarding Task Group including child exploitation, and engaging national contextual safeguarding expert in consultation role
- Increased performance management and quality assurance cycle

# Reflections & Lessons Learned

Concern about specific cohorts of children e.g. child at risk of exploitation - referrals are low and risks are higher

Some aspects of practice have thrived – for example engaging family members in solutions

Embracing new technologies and cultural change unlocking potential for the future

Although school attendance has increased its clear that families have been nervous and far fewer are in school than we would like

Families could be using Covid to avoid intervention - with fewer children seen face to face it can be difficult for practitioners to accurately assess risk

We are still concerned some cases we would normally have been working have not been referred – there will be unmet needs and the potential for a surge in demand to come

Making sure practitioners recognise the implications of lockdown on families, but don't lose sight of the other issues in a case

Reduced demand has meant reduced caseloads and performance in Social Work teams has actually improved



# Questions?

**COVID 19**

**Education and Children  
with Special Educational  
Needs**

# Our lockdown challenge - questions, questions, questions!

Schools are closed – or are they?

Is it safe for education providers to open for more children?

Schools are autonomous – or are they?

What do we do if schools won't or cannot open?

Who is a critical worker?

How do we help schools with remote learning?

Early Years settings, schools and colleges are 'closed', but open to the children of critical workers and specific, vulnerable children

Who are the vulnerable children? How do we get them to come to school?

How do we make sure that schools meet government expectations as far as possible?

Schools are places of learning – or are they?

Who is making sure there are enough places for children?

How do we support settings, schools and colleges to stay in touch with vulnerable families?

What do we do about children in the EHCP process, and those with SEND?

Do Academies and Independent schools have to co-operate with the LA?

What do we do about transport?

# The Settings, Schools and Colleges System: Response – childcare and learning

- Assumed the co-ordination and leadership of the education system for childcare (children of critical workers, ‘vulnerable’ children- with an EHCP, a social worker, or otherwise deemed vulnerable for child care)
- Supported schools, as needed, with home learning
- Structure schools and settings, back into governance clusters x 46 – linked Lead Adviser and small team
- Restructure senior Learning and Inclusion team to focus on support for settings, schools and colleges and leading 16 different workstreams of activity throughout lockdown
- Ensured cluster teams focused on consistent response from schools, checking staffing capacity needs, helping with risk assessments, talking to unions, arranging supply of PPE, making sure transport arrangements are in place, providing support for definitions of critical workers
- Established regular and routine communication, daily meetings of leaders, weekly meetings with Academy CEOs, daily written Alerts to settings and schools
- Monitored DFE guidance, updates and changes and developed practical tools and support for education providers, working across the council
- Acted as a critical conduit for education leaders to DFE to problem solve, and where possible influence policy
- Supported schools with the roll out of the national food voucher scheme

# **The Settings, Schools and Colleges System: Response – childcare and learning**

- Acted as a critical conduit for education leaders to DFE to problem solve, and where possible influence policy
- Supported schools with the roll out of the national food voucher scheme
- Providing significant resources to support learning, recovery curriculum
- Providing support from children's services more broadly to support schools inworking with families of most vulnerable children
- Co-ordinated national scheme to ensure those children with a social worker who need one, receive a laptop

## **Children and young people with SEND**

- Working with providers - ensured risk assessments – reviews - of over 7,000 children with an EHCP take place (currently 80% completed) and reasonable adjustments made
- Worked with Independent non-maintained sector to ensure provision is in place, or have picked up provision through a virtual school
- Provided pupil risk assessment templates to all schools to support making appropriate provision
- Provided daily Inclusion helpline, STEPs (behaviour support) to parents
- Continued to process EHCP referrals

# Reflections & Lessons Learned

SEND reasonable adjustments are tricky for a minority of children and this will continue to be a challenge in the weeks and months ahead

Norfolk settings, schools and colleges have responded very positively and worked co-operatively with the local authority

Introducing national food voucher scheme was not without issues initially, and took several weeks to get going

Settings, schools and colleges will need help for many months, supporting trauma, behaviour, complex needs, recovery curriculum planning, catch up

Regular meetings, communications and consultation has been valued and appreciated by education settings, schools and college leaders

Parents have been reluctant to send younger children back to school, and this confidence needs to be built over the next few weeks

Speed and pace of national change and expectations has been challenging, but understandable in this crisis

# Questions?

**COVID 19**

**Community & Tier 2  
Services**



# Community and Tier 2: Focus and Challenges

- How do we expand the range of “early help” support to proactively reach out to families in need when we don’t know who they are?
- As part of the wider system response to supporting families with provision of food and medicine including those who are shielding, how do we ensure a focus remains on identifying and supporting vulnerable children?
- How do we provide wrap around support for schools, setting and colleges to enable learning to continue and wider wellbeing needs are picked up?
- How can we help respond to the significant number of safeguarding referrals?
- How do we support schools and partner agency leading Family Support Plans when we can no longer have face to face meetings?
- How do we ensure we keep pathways and communication routes open with young people and families?

# Community and Tier 2 : Response

- Launched a county-wide communication campaign 'see something , hear something , say something with partners to remind people we are still open for business
- Coordinating across the Children's Partnership and sharing intelligence and data to identify vulnerable children and families who might be require additional support or where needs might be being missed
- Expanding the range of 'early help' support – proactively reaching out to families in need
- Wrapping additional help around the school cluster model – ensuring that the wider wellbeing needs of more vulnerable families are picked up and met
- Responding to the significant reduction in safeguarding referrals by establishing a campaign to facilitate better identification, reporting and protection of children during coronavirus lockdown.
- Maintaining and expanding the direct engagement of children and young people – ensuring they are not isolated and that we understand how the lockdown is affecting children and young people

# SEE SOMETHING HEAR SOMETHING SAY SOMETHING

These are difficult times and families are under huge amounts of pressure – we are here to help

If you hear something or see something that makes you feel worried about a child living nearby, please let us know

0344 800 8020

In an emergency call 999

Help us to keep Norfolk's children safe

Norfolk Safeguarding  
Children Partnership

Norfolk  
County Council

Coronavirus sucks, and so does  
being away from your friends...



we hope  
that you're  
safe at home

If you're feeling

unsafe or  
scared

Don't keep to yourself  
we are here to help

Text 07480635060  
or call 0344 800 8029



Norfolk Safeguarding  
Children Partnership

# THINK BEFORE YOU POST



Here are some top tips to help:

- Keep your device secure – do not sharing or information or passwords and check your settings and who can view your content
- Don't share your personal details like your name, date of birth, age, address or school and think about posting content with school logos or your number in the photo
- Think about who you are sending requests to and reviewing their posts – do you know them in real life? Only add people you know in real life
- Think before you post – does the content in a public space it can be shared with anyone
- Think about who you are talking to – people may think you are trusting them and sharing your information
- Take screenshots – You may be asked to meet up with someone who is pretending to be someone else. Screen images to make sure you're only spoken to online

If you need us:

We have launched a new phone line and text message service for you to use. We hope you are feeling happy and safe at home. However if you're feeling unsafe or scared, then don't keep it for yourself. We're here to help you!

Text on: 07480 635060  
Call on: 0344 800 8029

Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP) is here to help keep children safe at home. The partnership includes Norfolk Constabulary, Norfolk County Council's Children's Services and Norfolk Children and Young People's Health Services.

You can also find more support and advice at:  
norfolkcc.gov.uk/norfolk-police.uk/parentprotest.co.uk/1800number.co.uk/

Norfolk Safeguarding  
Children Partnership



stay safe

We want you to know we're still here.

These are unusual times for families. No matter your age or circumstance, many of us are feeling increased stress or maybe things are mounting up that we don't know how to deal with.

Just One Norfolk has support and advice for families so if you need us, contact us.

0300 300 0123  
www.justonenorfolk.norfolk.gov.uk

Norfolk Safeguarding  
Children Partnership



Sara is a young carer, she's been supporting her mum who has depression and anxiety.

Does that sound like you?

# HEROES AT HOME

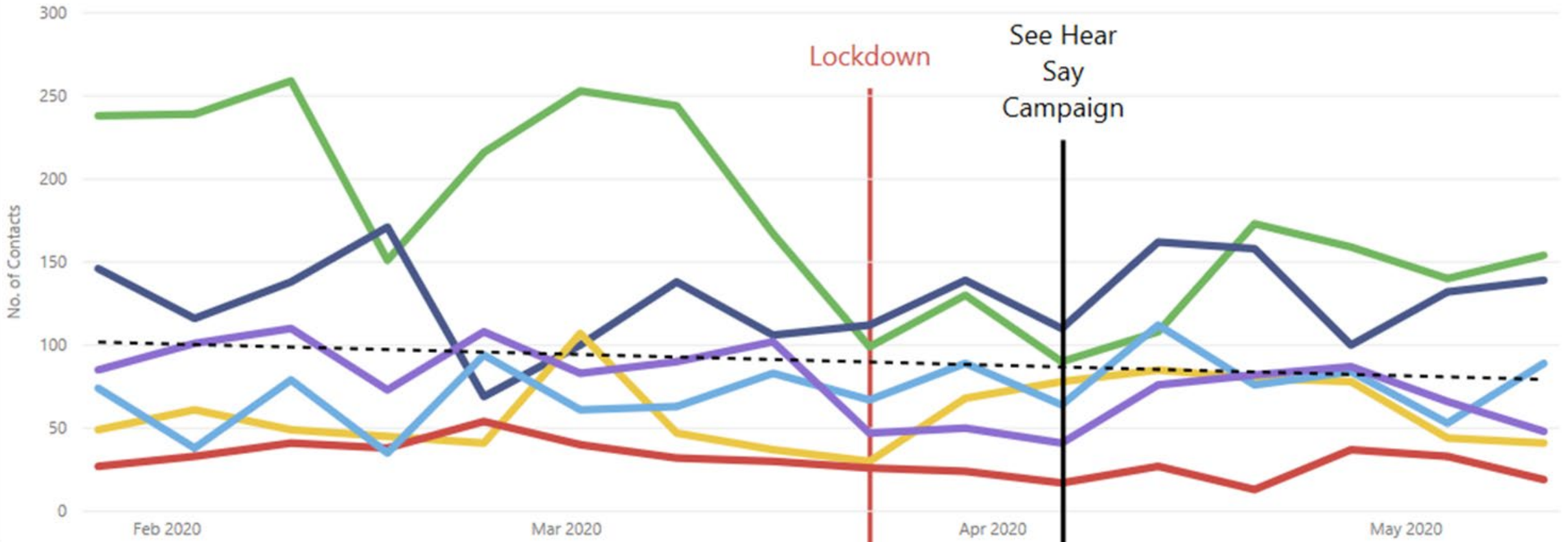
Covers Matter Norfolk is here to help. Visit [www.youngpersonsmattersnorfolk.org](http://www.youngpersonsmattersnorfolk.org) call the advice line 0800 583 046 for friendly support.

Norfolk Safeguarding  
Children Partnership

# Patterns of emerging needs presenting in CADs

No. of Contacts (grouped by weeks)

Presenting Issue ● Abuse or neglect ● Behaviour/conduct ● Domestic violence ● Family support ● Mental health ● Relationship conflict



27/01/20	03/02/20	10/02/20	17/02/20	24/02/20	02/03/20	09/03/20	16/03/20	23/03/20	30/03/20	06/04/20	13/04/20	20/04/20	27/04/20	04/05/20	11/05/20
619	588	676	513	582	644	614	525	381	500	400	570	582	545	468	490

Chat Health and Parentline  
Is at highest number of contacts in the year



Chat Health 1047 contacts

**Top 5 topics:**

low mood, peer relationships,  
self harm, services available,  
family relationships

Parentline – 701 contacts

**Top 5 topics:**

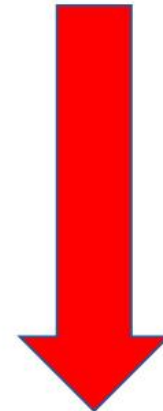
appointment change, minor illness, feeding  
signposting, mental health

NHS Just One Norfolk  
Week on week increase



7000 additional contacts –  
top pages: Mental Health,  
all the COVID responsive  
pages , Digital antenatal  
course. Over 5000 videos  
watched/week

NHS Just One Number  
50% of usual traffic



However following a '**We are still  
here**' social media campaign this  
has increased last week:

**Top 5 topics**

infant feeding, minor illness,  
feeding, sleep and  
behaviour/development

# Reflections & Lessons Learned

Continuing to develop the “early help” part of the system can support a surge in need as lockdown continues to be lifted

Taking a whole system approach, supporting early years settings, schools and post 16 providers to enable children & young people transition back into education

How do we build on the positive parts of our response to automate the sharing of data removing historic barriers

The need to focus on workforce development, taking a trauma informed approach to recovery across the partnership

Services returning to 'business as usual' post lockdown are able to take account of and adapt their offer in response to evidence about emerging needs (Surge)

For some families this period has increased their resilience and this is something we want to build on further

# Questions?



**COVID 19**

**Commissioning,  
Resources and Funding**



# Commissioning, Resource and Funding: Focus and Challenges

- Ensuring that providers of key services can continue to support and meet the needs of vulnerable children in the short and longer term
- Supporting our providers with overcoming operational challenges e.g. accessing PPE
- Working with providers to ensure continued operation of residential homes should significant numbers of staff become ill with COVID
- Working with providers to flexibly move resource across the system if needed
- Prioritising our support for strategically important providers and voluntary organisations, within an ever changing context
- Easing contractual issues and funding flows
- Understanding how we need to reshape the market to respond to emerging needs

# Commissioning, Resource and Funding: Response

- Worked closely with commissioners across the system to ensure a coordinated approach to managing and supporting providers.
- Maintained regular contact with providers as part of monitoring their capacity to maintain essential and critical services – offering support to maintain sufficiency and continuity in key service areas
- Supported the services we commission to move their support for children, young people or families onto telephone or online channels, in line with social distancing restrictions.
- Provided additional support to early years providers to remain open for the children of key workers. This has included a similar level of coordination and support to that for mainstream schools, as well as financial, staffing and catering support
- Ensured the continuity of our range of in-house Residential, Fostering, Semi-Independent and Adoption services, managing staffing challenges and working creatively to ensure we avoid disruption to care for vulnerable children
- Direct Payments restrictions lifted to enable purchase of toys/equipment etc to creatively support families while in lockdown at home
- Creative use of virtual youth engagement proving popular and productive, and likely to continue once face to face delivery can recommence

# Reflections & Lessons Learned

There is an opportunity to capitalise on an increased level of foster carer and adopter enquiries, as well as applications to work in Children's Services more broadly as the workforce availability and environment changes toward the helping and caring professions.

The priority now is to use our joint commissioning across social care, education and health, as well as our governance arrangements, including the Alliance Board, to maintain a coordinated co-commissioning approach with key partners.

The importance of working with the provider market – in particular critical and essential providers/ VCSE partners so that there is sustainability and capacity to flex delivery to respond to any 'surge'

In a crisis it is often the smaller voluntary sector organisation which are the most critical and which are at greatest risk without support

There is likely to be a lag in the financial impact for VCSE organisations, once current central government support ends, There is considerable uncertainty over future funding for the sector

# Questions?

**COVID 19**

**Looking ahead**

# Children and Families needs will be felt over the medium term and beyond

March 2020 – June 2020	July 2020 – December 2020	January 2021 onwards
Resilience	Normalise	Recovery
High Risk	Medium Risk	Low Risk

Risk level is an estimate based on current circumstance and will vary dependent on developing situation. e.g. economic impact, vaccine development...

# Overarching Objectives for Recovery Phase

- Managing the re-set and recovery activities across Children's Services
- Shaping and influencing the "new normal" across the Council and wider systems
- Developing our response to the anticipated surge in need / demand (over next 6 months)
- Preparing for a "second peak" or lockdown
- Reshaping and restarting our transformation programme including development of future model of support around schools, settings and communities (for the long term)
- Managing the financial implications of Covid 19 and the gap in public service funds – working to address the financial challenge with the same focus as we've managed the crisis

# Partnership Recovery Themes

01

**Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing** for children and families including concerns about C-19 and challenges at home

02

Needs around **Domestic Abuse & Family Relationships** and inability to escape abusive situations

03

**Substance Misuse** needs, linked to mental health

04

Individuals and organised **Online Exploitation** groups using the situation as an opportunity

05

Reduction in availability of **Respite** support for children and young people with SEND

06

**Young Carers** experiencing increased pressure and worry

07

Increased levels of **Bereavement** exacerbated by reduction in normal support mechanisms

08

Unmet **health** and **developmental needs** arising from late/no presentation or support

09

Reduction in **Language Acquisition** for vulnerable groups during education gap

10

Supporting children & young people **transitioning back to school**

11

**VCSE Sector** capacity, delivery and funding pressures



# Opportunities as we continue our transformation agenda

Our relationship with the school system in particular has been strengthened creating an opportunity to wrap support around in a preventative way

Greater family resilience is being evidenced and family networking is thriving in the current context, and this is an area we would want to build on

Significant opportunity to strengthen our recruitment and retention through greater flexible working and opportunity to increase workforce stability

Increasing our responsiveness to meet families' needs at times better for them and professional assessment purposes rather than being constrained by office opening hours.

In the mental health arena the crisis has accelerated the move away from the previous clinic-based model and towards early intervention and prevention

Volunteers have come forward in much greater numbers than previously

Potential to move 'upstream' together and have more and better 'early help' across cohorts

Partnership working has deepened and accelerated

Virtual working is unlocking creative practice and improved relationship and engagement with families and young people that we would want to include in our overall offer as we establish a "new normal"

# The outline of our recovery roadmap

