

25th March 2020

To all Partner Agencies of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board

Dear Partner,

Re. Current plans for Child Protection Conferences

In light of COVID 19 and the current pressures on all of our services, I am writing to inform you about how we intend to manage child protection conferences during this period. As you will appreciate this has been a fast-changing situation over the last few days.

We will continue to have Child Protection Conferences, but we realise that these conferences will look very different to what we are used to.

We had initially hoped to keep the option of holding face-to-face conferences if possible, a reality and had been looking at different ways whereby everyone could contribute to the conference. The latest government guidance has obviously changed this.

We are now expecting all conferences to be “virtual “ and we will be providing a number of options which you can use to take part in the conference – these will include the use of skype calls ; Microsoft teams and if none of these are feasible the CPC will make alternative arrangements with you directly.

We have decided that the usual quoracy criteria will not apply during this period.

We want to emphasise the importance of working alongside families in respect of these very different arrangements that we are making, and of course our ongoing commitment to listening to what families are saying to us.

We are of the view that where necessary conferences should still go ahead. Whilst we recognise that this may not be ideal, we are mindful that it is still important that we ensure appropriate plans are put in place to safeguard our most vulnerable children and young people.

We are expecting the Child Protection Co-ordinator (CPC) to liaise with the social worker and team manager about how best to manage the conference process on a case by case basis. If the family are able to they will be offered the opportunity to join the conference via skype or phone and if this is not possible the CPC will ensure they hold a discussion with the family both pre and post conference with the social worker to ensure we continue to include families as much as possible in this process.

Key professionals from our Partner Agencies will be asked to dial into the meeting wherever possible. We are asking partners to ensure that their written reports are circulated to the CPCs at least 48 hours before the conference, which will allow the CPC an opportunity to contact them for any further discussion or clarification if necessary.

ICPC's will remain the priority and the CPC will liaise with team managers and social workers on a case by case basis to ensure these meetings take place.

Review Conferences will continue as usual where possible, however there may be situations where CPCs undertake a more informal review of the case with the social worker/ team manager. This would also involve speaking with the family, and with other professionals involved with the family in order to review the current plan and potentially the CPC may decide to maintain the CP plan as it is until a more suitable time becomes available and a conference can be convened. We expect these cases to be minimal.

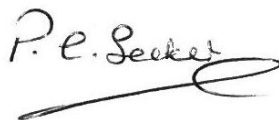
We have asked the CPCs to make decisions on a case by case basis and to work closely with team managers and social workers to ensure we manage conferences as best we can.

We hope these proposals are acceptable to you; could we ask you please to distribute this letter as appropriate within your agency.

As a Children and Families Service, we are prioritising support through continued contact with high risk child protection cases, our children-in-care and young people living in semi-independent accommodation.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact myself (paul.secker@essex.gov.uk), Tamsyn Basson, Service Manager (tamsyn.basson2@essex.gov.uk) or your quadrant Child Protection Co-ordinator.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. Secker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Paul Secker

Director for Safeguarding

Essex County Council

Copy to the Child Protection Co-ordinators, Team Managers, Service Managers, Directors of Local Delivery, Essex C.C.