

Annex to Child and Adult Safeguarding Policies in response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

Purpose and Scope:

At Ambitious about Autism (AaA) and Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust (AaAST) the health, wellbeing and safety of our children, young people and staff are our priority. We already have robust child and adult safeguarding policies and processes in place. These will continue to be enforced.

This document provides an update to our Child and Adult Safeguarding Policies in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. It covers TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College.

There have been significant changes within our settings in response to the outbreak. Many children and young people are now at home and staffing has been, and is likely to continue to be, significantly affected through illness, self-isolation and shielding.

Despite the changes, our schools' and college safeguarding policies and processes are fundamentally the same: **children and young people always come first, staff should respond robustly to safeguarding concerns and contact the DSL in line with our established safeguarding procedure.**

This annex sets out some of the adjustments we are making in line with the changed arrangements in the schools and college and following advice from government and local agencies. This annex is subject to change as a result of any further guidance from but not limited to, the Government, Department for Education and Public Health England as a result of the pandemic of the Coronavirus.

This annex does not take account of co-opting staff in from other schools/colleges or our children/young people and their supporting staff attending other settings. If this is to happen this annex will be amended accordingly.

This annex and any ensuing changes will be communicated to staff. It will remain in place until our schools return to normal operational procedures.

Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) in our schools and college:

- Viv Berkeley, Executive Principal and organisational lead for safeguarding, 07472 580 252
- Sean Egan, Assistant Head, TreeHouse School, (DSL), 07496 309761
- Tracey Capstick, Head of TreeHouse School, (Deputy DSL), 07553 607969
- Hannah Clements, Assistant Head, The Rise School, (DSL) 07584 124693
- Karen Oliver, Assistant Head, The Rise School (Deputy DSL) 07494 453416
- Diana White, Receptionist/Family Liaison, (Deputy DSL), 020 8099 0640
- Jacqui Steele, Assistant Principal, Ambitious College, (DSL), 07472 560027
- Linda Looney, Head of Ambitious College, (Deputy DSL), 07472 584 544

Staff Awareness:

The current pressures on children and their families are significant. There will be heightened awareness of family pressures through being contained in a small area, poverty and financial or health anxiety. These areas should be considered in the setting of any work for children to undertake at home (including recognising the impact of online learning). Staff will be aware of the mental health of both children and their parents and carers, informing the DSL about any concerns.

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Allegations or concerns about staff:

With such different arrangements in place children could be at greater risk of abuse. We remind all staff to maintain the view that *'it could happen here'* and to immediately report any concern, no matter how small, to the safeguarding team.

We have confirmed the arrangements to contact the LADO at the local authorities remain unchanged.

The schools will continue to follow the duty to refer to DBS any adult who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult, and to the Teacher Regulation Agency in line with paragraph 166 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019 using the address Misconduct.Teacher@education.gov.uk.

Holiday arrangements:

Our schools and college have ensured that home learning bags have been sent home with each child/young person to enable them to learn from home. There is also a contact rota in place in order to support families to stay in touch with key personnel from the schools or college. Over the Easter period the DSL from the schools and college will be ringing the families of the children/young people deemed most at risk to check in on them. All contact will be logged in BehaviourWatch.

Attendance:

The schools and college are following the [attendance guidance issued by government](#). Where a child is expected and does not arrive, we will follow our attendance procedure and make contact with the family. If contact is not possible within an hour of expected arrival time the DSL must be informed. The DSL will attempt a range of methods to contact the parent (Skype, FaceTime, through a relative etc) but if necessary, arrange a home visit by the school/college or another appropriate agency.

The school will also follow the attendance procedure if contact proves impossible with children at home.

Peer on peer abuse:

We recognise the potential for abuse to go on between young people, especially in the context of a school closure or partial closure. Our staff will remain vigilant to the [signs of peer-on-peer abuse](#), including those between young people who are not currently attending our provision. When making contact with these families our staff will ask about relationships between learners.

Risk assessing children and young people accessing our schools and college:

The Government has been clear that social distancing is now a matter of priority, and the safest place for most children is at home. For those with specific underlying health conditions (for example asthma, bronchitis, diabetes, being seriously overweight) the Government advises stringent 'social distancing'¹ and in some circumstances 'shielding'² depending on the nature of the condition (for example serious respiratory conditions, and those with increased risk of infection). These pupils/young people should not be attending school/college and we will support parents and carers to follow this guidance. The health of our vulnerable pupils and learners is imperative.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults> (accessed 29/03/2020)

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19> (accessed 29/03/2020)

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Any pupil or learner who is exhibiting symptoms however mild – a new and persistent cough and/or a fever - must remain at home for 7 days. If the pupil or learner lives in a household with someone who is exhibiting symptoms, they must remain isolated at home for 14 days.³ They will not be allowed to attend school or college during this period to reduce the risk of infection to others.

For all children and young people who remain at home we are providing resources for home learning.

Vulnerable children and children of critical workers:

The Government has asked schools and colleges to close to most pupils and learners and ‘to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend’. This means children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

Vulnerable children

Government guidance defines ‘vulnerable children’ to include those who have a social worker and those up to 25 years old with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. Those who have a social worker include looked after children, children with a child protection plan, and those who have been assessed as being in need under s.17 Children Act 1989.

‘Those with an EHC plan should be risk-assessed by their school/college in consultation with the local authority and parents, to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a school/college place in order to meet their needs, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home.’⁴

‘Special schools, colleges and local authorities are advised to make case by case basis assessments of the health and safeguarding considerations of pupils and students on an education, health and care (EHC) plan. For some, they will be safer in an education provision. For others, they will be safer at home.’⁵

Critical workers

‘Children with a parent or carer who is listed on the Government’s critical worker list⁶ should be considered for a school place, so long as their job cannot be done from home. Many parents working in these sectors will be able to ensure their child is kept at home. And every child who can be safely cared for at home should be, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.’⁷

Critical workers include those whose roles are essential in:

- Health and social care
- Education and childcare
- Key public services
- Local and national government
- Food and necessary goods
- Public safety and national security
- Transport
- Utilities, communication and financial services

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection> (accessed 29/03/2020)

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures/guidance-for-schools-about-temporarily-closing> (accessed 29/03/2020)

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers> (accessed 29/03/2020)

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision> (accessed 29/03/2020)

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures/guidance-for-schools-about-temporarily-closing> (accessed 29/03/2020)

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Running a safe service:

All our children and young people have an EHCP. Our intention is to support the most vulnerable pupils and learners, and those whose parents are critical key workers during this unprecedented time. However, we need to continue to review our provision in light of updates to Government guidance, the number of trained staff available to work, and other issues that impact on being able to run a safe service.

It is critical that any service we deliver must be a safe service. Our schools must risk assess daily to ensure we have the correct levels of trained staff in place to meet children's needs safely. Where we do not have the correct staffing levels in place, we will make decisions on which pupils and learners can receive a service based on transparent criteria.

The children and young people who attend our settings are some of the most vulnerable in society. They thrive in settings where there is a predictable timetable, they have developed a rapport with their staff teams, have staff trained in working with them around medication, behaviour that challenges, and what works/doesn't work for that young person. Bringing in agency staff or staff from other schools, at short notice, would be counter productive and would cause a lot of anxiety for many of our pupils. Should we need to develop that approach it would require careful thought through and this annex amended accordingly.

Criteria:

To be open, fair and transparent Ambitious about Autism and the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust have established a set of criteria to support decision making in terms of which children and young people can access our settings. However, it is important to note that **even if a young person qualifies to attend, they might not be offered a place as it will be dependent on our setting being able to operate safely.**

All children /young people will be provided with home learning, which will be updated regularly. As per Government guidance, we will work with Local Authorities to monitor the welfare of vulnerable children/young people who are not attending school/college.

| Children to remain at home | Children who may be offered a place listed in order of priority. We will assess all children in criteria (1) against staffing teams/levels. After that if we still have capacity we will move onto criteria (2) and so on. All decisions are subject to our ability to run a safe service. |
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| Children with symptoms, however mild – a new and persistent cough and/or a fever (for at least 7 days) | 1) Both parents/carers are critical keyworkers, or in a household where the lone parent/carer is a key worker (Confirmation of the critical nature of the role will be needed) |
| Children in a household where someone is exhibiting symptoms (for at least 14 days, unless they start exhibiting symptoms, when the 7 day rule then applies as above) | 2) Children with a named social worker, prioritising looked after children and children placed in residential care. |
| Children with underlying health conditions who have been advised by their medical practitioner to be 'shielded' to avoid infection | 3) One parent/carer is a critical keyworker with no other childcare arrangements (Confirmation of the critical nature of the role will be needed) |
| Children with underlying health conditions who are advised to 'socially isolate' to avoid infection | 4) Children with EHC plans who have been risk assessed that their needs cannot be met at home. This may include households where there is more than one child with an EHCP for special educational needs. |

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| Parent, carer or child/young person's choice to 'socially distance' and remain at home – every child who can be safely cared for at home should be, to limit the chance of the virus spreading | |
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Parents who would like to request that their child or young person attends school must contact the school with information about why their child may qualify and confirm that the child has no symptoms (or living with someone with symptoms) or underlying health condition that requires social isolation or shielding.

If a place is offered it is not compulsory for critical workers to accept the place. There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend school, so long as it is safe for them to do so. Parents will not be penalised for not sending their children to school.

Safeguarding arrangements for children and young people learning from home:

Through our risk assessment process, we have identified children and young people most at risk. For those in this category, not attending school or college, we will continue to monitor through weekly telephone calls with the parents/carers and where possible, with the child/young person themselves. At least one of these calls will be with the DSL. After Easter, staffing dependent, we will undertake doorstep visits to the most at risk children/young people. All communication will be logged in BehaviourWatch.

Safeguarding arrangements in place to support online 'distance learning':

Some children and young people, for whom it is appropriate, will be using the internet more during this period. The school/college may also use online approaches to deliver training or support. Staff will be aware of the signs and signals of cyberbullying and other risks online and apply the same child-centred safeguarding practices as when children/young people were learning at the school/college.

- The school/college continues to ensure appropriate filters and monitors are in place
- Our Education Committee will review arrangements to ensure they remain appropriate
- The school/college will take on board guidance from the UK Safer Internet Centre on safe remote learning and guidance for safer working practice from the Safer Recruitment Consortium.
- Staff have discussed the risk that professional boundaries could slip during this exceptional period and been reminded of the organisational code of conduct and importance of using school/college systems to communicate with children and their families.
- Staff have read the 20 safeguarding considerations for livestreaming prior to delivering any livestreamed sessions
- Children and young people accessing remote learning will receive guidance on keeping safe online and know how to raise concerns with the school, Childline, the UK Safer Internet Centre and CEOP.
- Parents and carers have received information about keeping children safe online with peers, the school, other education offers they may access and the wider internet community. We have set out the school's/college approach, including the sites children and young people will be asked to access and set out who from the school/college (if anyone) their child is going to be interacting with online. Parents have been offered the following links:
 - [Internet matters](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
 - [London Grid for Learning](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
 - [Net-aware](#) - for support for parents and careers from the NSPCC

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- [Parent info](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
 - [Thinkuknow](#) - for advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online
 - [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) - advice for parents and carers
- Free additional support for staff in responding to online safety issues can be accessed from the [Professionals Online Safety Helpline at the UK Safer Internet Centre](#).

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