**FIRST DAY RESPONSE SYSTEM FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE OPEN TO CHILDRENS SOCIAL CARE AND ATTEND EARLY YEARS SETTINGS AND CHILDREN**

**(adapted from model of practice during the national lockdown to support children and their families)**

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1. **INTRODUCTION**
	1. Regularly attending school or college is vital for children’s educational progress, for their wellbeing, and for their wider development. For children with a social worker, attending school is also a protective factor ensuring that children are visible to and supported by professionals.
	2. During the COVID 19 pandemic Sefton have had to adapt rapidly to keep children safe, secure and supported. One of the biggest challenges has been trying to encourage those parents to send their children to school who are eligible to have a place. Parents have been genuinely worried about sending their children into school. For professionals involved with vulnerable children it has been challenging balancing the risks of children contracting and/or spreading COVID-19 with counteracting risks of children’s learning loss.
	3. In response to this a first day response attendance initiative model of practice was designed and delivered at both pace and scale across Sefton. It was put into place to support children with a social worker, those open to Early Help and children who are supported by an Education, Health and Care Plan.
	4. Sefton Council have made the decision to continue with the first day response model of practice as they feel it will support children who have a social worker to recover from the pandemic and will support the progress and promote good education outcomes for the cohort of children.
	5. **OTHER GROUPS OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN WILL BE MONITORED THROUGH THE SCHOOL AND SEFTON COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES. THERE IS A DEDICATED WORKER FOR CHILDREN SUPPORTED BY AN EDUCATION, HEALTH AND CARE PLAN**
	6. This guidance sets out expectations on Children Social Care, First day Response Attendance Team, Virtual School, Early Years Settings and Schools to convey high expectations for ensuring attendance is a priority. The first day response system will strengthen the safeguarding arrangements for those children who are not attending School or an Early Years Setting.
	7. If children have an Early Help plan the schools need to work closely with the named early help worker for the school if they have concerns about the child.
2. **CHILDREN WITH A SOCIAL WORKER ATTENDANCE GROUP**

2.1 A meeting each month will take place to enable local authority oversight of the first day response initiative. The revised first day response system will be discussed at this meeting to see how it is progressing and to address any barriers that are preventing the system from being effective. Attendance data was gathered from local authority systems, enabling analysis and identification of attendance patterns that may emerge.

2.2 **Membership of the Group include: -**

* Tracy McKeating – School Attendance Lead
* Julie Bucknall – Service Manager, Children’s Social Care
* Mary Palin – Headteacher Virtual School
* Linda McQueen – Lead Early Years
1. **MONITORING ATTENDANCE OF THOSE CHILDREN WHO ARE REGISTERED AT EARLY YEARS SETTINGS**

3.1 Early Years Settings must report those children who are absent from the setting who are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked after child.

* 1. A process has been put into place that explains how Early Years Settings will operate the first day response system. **(See appendix one)**
	2. It is essential that Children’s regular and sustained attendance is promoted at an early year setting or school in order for them to access their free entitlement, which is essential if they are to make progress and achieve expected outcomes.
	3. Sefton Local Authority and Sefton Early Years Providers embrace their role in promoting the benefits of regular attendance for young children with their parents and carers.
	4. Sefton Early Years Providers are advised to monitor children’s attendance as a part of their safeguarding practice.
	5. Early Years in Sefton:
* Deliver high quality education and care underpinned by the secure routines and attachments that are necessary to support children’s development as independent, resilient and capable learners.
* Are committed to supporting children’s parents and carers to understand the positive impact that punctuality and attendance has throughout life.

3.7 In a small minority of cases, poor attendance could be an indicator of more serious concerns for a child or family. Therefore, monitoring attendance may be crucial in keeping a child or other family members safe from harm.

1. **HOW CAN EARLY YEARS SETTINGS AND EDUCATION SETTINGS PROMOTE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE DURING THE PANDEMIC?**
* Reassure parents about what COVID 19 secure measures have been put into place.
* Recognise that children attending an early year’s settings is an important protective factor for children receiving support from a social worker.
* Ensure all contact details are updated regularly, preferably two that include one outside of the household.
* All staff need to be clear about reporting safeguarding concerns including where absence is a cause for concern, or the family withdraw the child from the setting.
* Be clear on the expectations on how a parent should report a child’s absence, with a specific time to contact prior to each session. If the parent does not make the call, then the setting needs to follow up the absence.
* Follow EYFS Statutory Guidance by keeping accurate records of the daily times of arrival and departure for each child. This should list the steps taken from the initial day of absence, including how this is recorded and if any concerns are raised. **This would include reporting any absences to social workers.**
* A designated person who will oversee the attendance at the setting.
* Using positive strategies to increase attendance on an individual basis.
* Regular conversations with parents/carers about the importance of good attendance.
* Ensure that key information can be translated in languages that support those children in your care.
* Be flexible regarding session times to support those families who may find particular days difficult, e.g. regular hospital appointments, shift patterns of parents, new baby in the family.
* Contact Early Help/undertake an Early Help Assessment, concerns around attendance are indicative of other vulnerabilities within the family. (If there is no social worker involved).
* Provide clear information on the benefits of accessing and attending the funded places, including how children develop and highlight the impact on how low or inconsistent attendance can hinder children’s development, particularly in the transition period to supporting children to settle.

**5.** **MONITORING ATTENDANCE OF THOSE CHILDREN WHO HAVE A SOCIAL WORKER WHO ARE ON THE ROLL OF A SCHOOL OR AN EDUCATION SETTING**

5.1 A process has been put into place that explains how schools and education settings will operate the first day response system. **(See appendix 3)**

5.2 When a child needs to self-isolate for whatever reason, Sefton schools and the Local Authority will prioritise support, including increasing home visits.

1. **WHAT CAN SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION SETTINGS DO TO SUPPORT GOOD ATTENDANCE DURING THE PANDEMIC**
* Reassure parents/carers what COVID 19 secure measures are in place.
* Ensure they have all up-to-date contact numbers for the family, including one outside of the household.
* Participate in Sefton’s first day response system by submitting the form daily.
* Follow up with parents/carers if a child is expected to attend and does not, and then liaise with social workers accordingly.
* Recognise education settings are an important protective factor for children receiving support from a social worker.
* Where children and young people are absent from school during the pandemic, ensure they receive their free school meal entitlement.
* Ensure children and young people have access to a digital device to engage in remote learning in order to make progress.
* Undertake door step welfare visits when children are absent to ensure they are seen safe and well.
* Ensure children are provided with the necessary support to prevent them from becoming drawn into harmful and potentially criminal activities which is a real concern, especially for older children.

**APPENDIX ONE**

1. Non- attendance noted by Early Years Provider.
2. Social Worker informed of absence by the setting.
3. Provider contacts family per setting policy to ascertain reasons for absence.
4. Early Years provider completes 1st day Response Form and submits it to the LA Early Years. Contains Attendance email address by 10:30 a.m. each day. EarlyYearsAttendance@sefton.gov.uk
5. Attendance meeting held discuss and assess any concerns and if an attendance welfare visit is required by the local authority.
6. Where PVI Nursery / Childminder closed due to COVID, Q10 will inform 1st Responder and an attendance welfare visit will take place each week during nursery closure.
7. Liquid logic and other systems updated. Feedback to Early Years Setting.

**APPENDIX** **TWO**

1. School to complete First Day Response Form daily for all absent children who:
* Are open to Social Care (LAC, CP, CIN or undergoing a C&F Assessment)
* Are open to Social Care and have an Education, Health and Care Plan.
1. FDR Attendance staff hold Triage mtg at 11 a.m. daily to look at forms and allocate home visit requests.
2. FDR home visit completed that day where possible. Visit to address following areas;
* Has the child been seen?
* Barriers to attending to be explored if not attending.
* Access to home learning. To include IT and internet access if tested positive for COVID.
1. **FDR Attendance Team**
* Visit to be input onto LCS and email feedback to school, Social Worker and Team Manager.

**School guidance for completing First Day Response form**

* School must ensure that all fields are completed in full within the form.
* Children open to social care who are not attending school should be seen each week and school should clearly indicate if a home visit is needed by the Attendance Team?
* Where a family are presenting with Covid symptoms or have a positive Covid test result, these should be clearly indicated on the form to be reviewed by Tracy McKeating.
* Form to be sent via email to stephanie.barnes@sefton.gov.uk by 10:30 a.m. each day for triage.

**APPENDIX THREE**

**FIRST DAY RESPONSE FORM (V6)**

**FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN OPEN TO SOCIAL CARE (LAC, CP, CIN or undergoing C+F ASSESSMENT)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name of School :** | **Date :** |
| **Name of person completing form and contact number :** |  |
| **Email address of person(s) who should receive feedback :** |  |

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| **Name of child / Young person** | **DOB** | **Parent/Carer****Name** | **Home address** **AND** **contact number** | **Type of Plan****LAC** **CP****CIN** **C+F Asst** | **Name of Social Worker** **AND** **contact number** | **Reason for absence/****comments**  | **Does the family have Covid symptoms OR** **had a positive Covid Test result? (Yes/No)** | **Confirm how SW has been informed of absence** **(Email /TC)** | **DAY and DATE CHILD LAST SEEN****IN PERSON** **AND BY WHOM****School, SW, Attendance Team, etc** | **Confirm if a home visit needs to be undertaken by the Attendance Team today** **(Yes / No)** |
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**NB: All First Day Response absence returns must be emailed back by 10.30am to: Steph Barnes (****stephanie.barnes@sefton.gov.uk****)**