

Keeping Connected - The CPCScotland Weekly Bulletin

Issue 2 - Tuesday 7th April 2020

Issued to support CPCs and partners during the COVID 19 Public Health Emergency.

Many thanks to all of our members who have shared examples of practice and resources over the past week. I would ask all members not to hesitate to continue to share examples of resources or good practice they think may be of interest with CPCScotland so that your information and innovation can continue to support us all at this difficult time. Please send to cpcscotland-liaison@strath.ac.uk .

Keep safe

Alan Small; Chair Child Protection Committees Scotland

1 Coronavirus (Scotland) legislation

Members of the Scottish Parliament have approved the Coronavirus (Scotland) Bill which brings in new emergency powers affecting the discharge of public duties and the operation of public services. Proposed measures of particular relevance to child protection relate to

- Requirements as to members of children's hearings
- Child protection order timescales
- Maximum period for which a compulsory supervision order has effect
- Period within which children's hearing must be heard in certain cases
- Maximum period for which interim compulsory supervision order or interim variation of compulsory supervision order has effect
- Modification of certain time limits for making and determination of appeals
- Attendance at children's hearings
- Authentication of children's hearings documentation
- Looked after children - foster and kinship care
- Secure accommodation

The Scottish Government's Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 can be found here: ([https://www.parliament.scot/S5/Bills/Coronavirus%20\(Scotland\)%20Bill/SPBill66AS052020.pdf](https://www.parliament.scot/S5/Bills/Coronavirus%20(Scotland)%20Bill/SPBill66AS052020.pdf)-)

A brief guidance note for stakeholders is attached at Appendix 1 and further guidance designed to provide more information about the changes contained in the Act can be found here: <https://www.chip-partnership.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coronavirus-Scotland-Act-2020.pdf>.)

The Scottish Government has published a Children's Rights and Wellbeing impact assessment in relation to this legislation: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-scotland-bill-child-rights-welfare-impact-assessment/>

2 Coronavirus Crisis: Guidance on Compliance with Court Orders Relating to Parental Responsibilities and Rights

The Lord President has published a short statement intended to offer general advice to parents and carers whose children are the subject of orders made by a court relating to parental responsibilities and rights, for example in relation to contact or residence. <https://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/docs/default-source/default-document-library/guidance-on-compliance-with-family-court-orders-27-03-20.docx?sfvrsn=0>

3 Internet Safety

During this time many children are spending more time online and on social media. This vital connection with friends, family, teachers, social workers and others can help to reduce the feelings of isolation. However there is a risk that the increase in online activity by young people along with limited access usual support networks may be exploited by perpetrators of online abuse.

For your information we have collated links to resources on online safety which are relevant to keeping children safe online at this time.

Childline

Advice for children and young people to help keep safe online and to know what to do when things go wrong: <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/staying-safe-online/>

Thinkuknow

A website featuring films, learning activity and information to help young people keep themselves safe from sexual abuse and exploitation: <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk>

UK Safer Internet Centre

Online safety tips, advice and resources to help children and young people stay safe online: <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/>

CEOP - Child Exploitation and Online Protection

A safe and secure place to report if you have been a victim of sexual online abuse or you're worried this is happening to someone you know: <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>

4 New CELCIS coronavirus resource page

There's a new CELCIS online resource with key information, advice, guidance and signposting specifically to support the care and protection of children and young people in Scotland during the coronavirus outbreak:

<https://www.celcis.org/covid19info/> #COVID19

5 Sharing Local Issues and Responses

A number of CPCs provided feedback to CPCScotland on challenges being faced by services in their areas. Some themes and reflections are summarised below

- Staffing levels have been hit resulting focus is on critical business and practitioners working with families where they don't have an existing relationship when covering for absent colleagues
- Limited uptake of education provision for vulnerable children with risk that they will become even more vulnerable and escalating risk missed.
- Use of technology to allow virtual attendance by practitioners and families at Case Conferences, Core Groups and Children's Hearings is being used widely. Staff also using different methods to keep in touch with children, young people and their families remotely. Some areas reporting this is going well but other reporting challenges for families who do not have access to devices to allow them to engage in this way.
- Advice on social distancing and self-isolation is resulting in some vulnerable families refusing access to workers due to genuine fears over infection risk and / or as a way to avoid contact with services. This is making it difficult to assess risk in many families.
- Lack of PPE for staff visiting those in isolation / with symptoms has been highlighted by a number of areas.
- Impact on mental health of parents, carers, children and young people is a concern for services, particularly for individuals with pre-existing mental health issues.
- There is limited anecdotal evidence of reduced child protection referrals from some areas (likely due to children not being seen outwith the family home) however suggestion from one area of a possible increase in referrals where parents are under the influence of alcohol/drugs.

CPCs are also adapting their ways of doing business during the current crisis

- Glasgow CPC Chair is receiving weekly Situation Reports from the Public Protection Contingency Planning Meeting and the CPC has formally delegated powers to deal with ICRs and SCRs.
- Western Isles CPC held its first virtual CPC meeting last week with approximately 15 members present

If you are aware of any emerging themes from your area or if you would like to let us know how your CPC is responding please get in touch.

6 Protection of Children during the Coronavirus Pandemic

The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action has published a technical note to support child protection practitioners to better respond to the child protection risks during the COVID-19 pandemic. Part 1 presents the potential child protection risks COVID-19 can pose to children and Part 2 presents programmatic options for action:

https://alliancecpha.org/en/system/tdf/library/attachments/the_alliance_covid_19_brief_version_1.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=37184

7 Child Welfare and Pandemics: What We Know and What We Can Do? ISPAN Webinar

This webinar shares information from the University of Toronto Policy Bench report, Child Welfare and Pandemics Literature Scan. The webinar has been recorded and should now be available on the website:

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/4517748548844287246>

8 IRISS Guidelines

IRISS have produced guidelines for social workers during the Covid-19 pandemic: <https://www.iriss.org.uk/news/features/2020/03/25/guidelines-social-workers-during-covid-19-pandemic>

9 In the media

- On Thursday 2nd April the Guardian published a piece on social workers fears during lockdown titled 'I can't know the children are safe': https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/apr/02/children-safe-social-workers-fears-lockdown-coronavirus?CMP=share_btn_tw
- On 31st March Scottish Government announced more than £1.5million in support services for women and children suffering domestic abuse: <https://twitter.com/BBCScotlandNews/status/1244955962567462913?s=20>

10 Other News

Caring for Vulnerable Children MOOC

The free CELCIS online course Caring for Vulnerable Children starts on 6 April: <https://www.celcis.org/training-and-events/events-pages/caring-vulnerable-children/>

Please feel free to let us know what you think about the bulletin and provide information for inclusion in future editions. Please contact Alan Small or Susan Mitchell at cpcscotland-liaison@strath.ac.uk

Guidance note - Coronavirus (Scotland) Bill

The emergency Coronavirus (Scotland) Bill was published on Tuesday 31 March 2020. We expect all three stages of its passage to conclude on Wednesday 1 April 2020. Subject to the Parliament's approval, the Bill is likely to come into force next week. Details can be found here

[https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Bills/Coronavirus%20\(Scotland\)%20Bill/SPBill66S052020.pdf](https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Bills/Coronavirus%20(Scotland)%20Bill/SPBill66S052020.pdf)

Among other things, the Bill contains provisions that if passed will:

- extend protection from eviction for tenants while confined to their homes.
- alleviate pressures on public services, business and consumers and enable continued operation of services while controls on movements are in place. For example there are provisions for an extended moratorium on debt relief, extended and more flexible deadlines for FOI, suspending timescales set out in the Social Security (Scotland) Act, and delaying ballots for Business Improvement Districts.
- enable the justice system to continue to deliver essential services.

The majority of measures in the Bill will automatically expire six months after coming into force. They may be extended for two further periods of six months, giving a maximum duration of 18 months.

Once the Bill has completed its Parliamentary process, we will provide high level guidance to assist public bodies identify the provisions that are likely to be relevant and action they need to take.

Coronavirus (S) Bill 2020 – child care, protection and justice provisions

Provisions of direct relevance to child protection, foster and kinship care, children's hearings and secure care have been developed for inclusion in the Coronavirus (Scotland) Bill 2020. Guidance for affected staff and volunteers on the emergency legislation is in preparation and should be available week beginning 6 April. The following topics are covered in summary below:

Requirements as to members of children's hearings - The Bill relaxes the requirement for three panel members, and for a male panel member to be on each hearing.

Child protection orders - Following the emergency placement of a child under a CPO, the Bill excises the requirement for a 2nd working day hearing, and amends related timescales.

Maximum period for which a compulsory supervision order has effect - No compulsory supervision order shall lapse if its original end date has past, except where it has not otherwise been reviewed and continued within 6 months of its expiry date.

Period within which children's hearing must be heard in certain cases - Following urgent transfers of children into certain placements the Bill amends the time limit for a hearing to be held to 7 days, instead of 3 days.

Looked after children - foster and kinship care - The Bill removes the requirement on foster panels to make recommendations about the maximum number of children a particular foster carer may have in their care at any one time. The Bill also enables a local authority to place a child with a kinship carer, in an emergency, for a period not exceeding 5 working days, instead of 3 working days.

Maximum period for which interim compulsory supervision order or interim variation of compulsory supervision order has effect - The Bill provides that the maximum period for which an interim compulsory supervision order has effect is 44 days rather than 22 days.

Modification of certain time limits for making and determination of appeals - The Bill extends the time limits for the making, disposal or determination of appeals or the making or lodging of a range of court applications.

Attendance at children's hearings - The Bill makes changes to facilitate the remote attendance of people who have right to attend a children's hearing in person.

Authentication of children's hearings documentation - The Bill enables the Reporter or chairing panel member to electronically authenticate documents.

Secure accommodation - In emergency cases, the Bill extends the maximum time in which a child may be kept in secure accommodation on the authority of the chief social work officer from 72 to 96 hours