



**To: All Headteachers/Principals of Norfolk Schools**

Date: 16 March 2020

Dear Headteacher/Principal

I am writing to you to further update you on the Council's work in relation to Coronavirus CORVID-19. We recognise that you will be inundated with a range of messages. This letter will focus on:

- How we will communicate with you
- Working together.
- Key messages for education providers

### **What have we been doing?**

Whilst NCC leaders have been meeting for some time about the implications of the current situation, we have today stepped up our contingency planning from silver to gold command. This means that we are now meeting daily as a council as well as at a departmental level to ensure a co-ordinated response to the current crisis.

Furthermore, last week Sara Tough – Executive Director for Children's Service and I (or the other way around if from you Sara) met with the Chairs of the Headteacher Associations, and the Chair of the Norfolk Governors Network to discuss implications for schools. This was to ensure a locally co-ordinated implementation of national messages.

### **How we will communicate with you?**

We will step up the frequency of messages to you and liaise daily with the Chairs of the Headteacher Associations.

We will also re-organise our services in order to engage with you around specific challenges.

We are asking you to work together in your geographical clusters to ensure a community focused response. We will identify a named adviser to work with each cluster.

### **Working together**

As part of our duties our co-ordination and support will focus on three core areas.

This will require a system-wide response:

- 1) Safeguarding children
- 2) Ensuring the continuity of education
- 3) Civil contingency planning.

Schools will be increasingly affected by the worsening situation in relation to this escalating virus. As guidance changes and the self-isolation is potentially widened,

we will be faced with more and more challenge to keep schools open. However, it remains our firm position, in line with DFE guidance (16/03/2020), that all schools and early years settings should remain open.

The country is facing an unprecedented crisis and it is imperative that we come together to work in the best interest of children and families. To that end we know that you will expect teaching and support staff in all early years settings and schools to remain active, at school wherever possible & safe and working to support children and their families.

**Safeguarding children** remains our key priority and so we are concerned about those children and families for whom early years provision and going to school is a key protective factor. We know you will be too. Children's Services are currently organising our own services to ensure that those children and young people who are in Care, and those on a Child Protection Plan are well safeguarded and supported. However, we know that there are other children and families that you will be concerned about if, and when schools are unable to be open for children to attend. We ask that you identify those children, and families and as part of your contingency planning. It will be crucial to have a clear plan about how you will stay in contact with those families. We will provide guidance about how we can support you, especially if your concerns escalate. We are also looking at a community plan to support families where needed.

**Ensuring continuity of education** is of course your current priority. We know this will be of particular concern in relation to many vulnerable families, but also to those who maybe preparing to sit external examinations. We know that you are now engaged in preparing materials and resources to support children and young people if they spend time at home, rather than in school.

In order to support you we will be pausing all continuous professional development purchased through Educator Solutions as of Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020. We know that this will ensure that you can prioritise having staff available in school, and so courses, network meetings and training may not be your current priority. Where we can we will be contacting you to offer what we can through webinars and other online facilities. We will contact you to ensure that staff booked on to these courses know they are cancelled, and we will discuss reimbursement, or rebooking in the future. This will also mean that the Learning Inclusion staff and those who would have been leading CPD in Educator Solutions are available to support schools who need some additional capacity to put together work for children. We are especially keen to support smaller schools where staffing capacity is, or may become stretched.

**Civil contingency planning.** We will encourage and support a coherent resilience plan for each geographical cluster. We ask that you work with us on this as a matter of urgency. We need to understand your plan to ensure that schools are able to work together in the best interests of children and families in your local communities. We will provide some further guidance on this through your named adviser.

It is highly possible that we will all need to play a role in helping to prioritise the support to keep front line services, especially in relation to the NHS and adult and children's social care functioning.

## **Key messages to Education Providers**

### **Message 1**

NCC is working on contingency and resilience planning. We will communicate with you and lead a co-ordinated response. We need you to work with us.

### **Action**

Please share this message with your staff.

### **Message 2**

We expect, in line with DFE guidance, all early years provision and schools to stay open at this time.

**Action**

Please tell us if you have staff self-isolating, or testing positive, or plan to partially close or fully close your school for any reason, ahead of a DfE directive to do so.

**Message 3**

Schools must work together in a geographical cluster as soon as possible to plan a co-ordinated local response.

**Action**

Work on an urgent resilience plan with your geographical cluster and co-ordinate with your named adviser.

**Message 4**

Identify the children and families that you would be worried about, if they are unable to attend schools for a period of time. This concerns children over and above those that you know are in local authority Care and subject to a Child Protection Plan.

**Action**

Plan your support and contact to those families ahead of any future closure of schools to children and young people.

Finally, contact points remain as per the communication on 10/03/2020. However, we will increasingly provide you with further, local contact points and clarity about systems and process to escalate any concerns about children and families.

Yours sincerely



**Sara Tough**  
**Executive Director of Children's Services**

Contact Details (same as in last letter)

For Health and Safety related questions, or reporting - please contact the Health and Safety Team via [healthandsafety@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@norfolk.gov.uk) or telephone 01603 573562.

For any other issues you may wish to discuss, in relation to the operation or closing of the school, please contact Michelle Smith via [schoolclosures@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:schoolclosures@norfolk.gov.uk) or telephone 01603 222994 – who will ensure that you are contacted by a senior officer.

For out of hours contact with the Local Authority please call 07623 912974. Leave a message being clear your call is in relation to Coronavirus COVID-19 and you will be called back.

The Department for Education Helpline:

Phone: 0800 046 8687 Email: [DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk](mailto:DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk)

Opening hours: 8am to 6pm (Monday to Friday)