**Advice and Guidance for Virtual Team Around the Family Meetings**

This guidance is being provided for coordinators of an Early Help Assessment with regard to the Covid 19 pandemic.

**N.B your own individual agencies should have also given you guidance with regard to your working arrangements and supporting vulnerable families.**

In these unprecedented times it may be that you are in regular contact phone/email with the family or one of the agencies within your TAF are in regular contact.

If you feel that a home visit is necessary with a family this should be undertaken **within the guidance of your own agency, government and public health advice.**

There needs to be an understanding that these are difficult times for everyone and celebrate what a family is doing well. It may well be that families will not be able to achieve some of their actions/tasks due to the current situation. We know that families are likely to experience increased stress during the lockdown and will therefore require greater support.

Virtual TAF

* If the TAF is due the coordinator of the assessment emails/phones all the members of the TAF and asks for an update about the child /family – giving the agency a clear timescale of when the information needs to be back with the coordinator – 5 working days for completion of information would suffice.
* A suggestion is to set the email out like below:
* What is working well?
* What are you worried about?  Has there been further worries that increases the worry of harm?
* What needs to happen that can be put in place to support the family at this current time?
* Has the worries increased so much that the children are at risk of significant harm?
* Ask agencies to comment on the actions from the plan – they should have a copy of

the plan – if they have not been given a plan,  ensure that they have.

* Arrange a time to phone the parents/carers to discuss the feedback – this may be a regular contact you have already set up with the family.
* The family need to be praised with what is going well.  There should be no surprises for the family, so if an agency involved has new or increasing worries **they should** have already shared this with the family and suggested tasks/actions.
* Once the discussion with the family has been undertaken a review note and if needed a new plan should be written up and sent out/given firstly to family and then all agencies round the table.
* Where there are increasing worries from an agency, there needs to be further discussion. If the worry meets the threshold for social care decide which practitioner will complete and return the single contact referral form to the safeguarding hub.  **N.B parental/carers consent is needed for the referral to the hub unless there is immediate risk of harm.**
* Where the EHA is due to a child’s development learning /SEND you could access the SEND Triage Huddle. The special educational needs and disability (SEND) Triage Huddle is an education, health and social care multi-agency response to supporting the needs of SEND pupils at this current time.
* The purpose of the huddle is to:
* offer support with risk assessing individual pupils with SEND who are attending a hub school.
* address general SEND queries through signposting to relevant resources/guidance as appropriate.
* allocate appropriate staff to give virtual support for known individual SEND pupils.
* You can contact the SEND referral line on **0333 0150816** (from 10am – 12pm, Monday to Friday). It is anticipated

If you need any further advice regarding Early Help Assessments please contact one of the Early Help Officers all their details are at <https://www.cumbriasafeguardingchildren.co.uk/LSCB/professionals/earlyhelp/earlyhelptteamleaflet.asp>