

3rd April 2020

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Dear Colleagues

Vulnerable Children Returns

Thank you to those who have already completed your vulnerable children return for the week commencing Monday 23 March. As a reminder, the School Communication of 27 March asked that you complete the return for week commencing 23 March as soon as you are able and every Friday thereafter.

We now have returns for most Isle of Wight schools. If you have not yet made your return for week commencing 23 March, please now do so as a matter of urgency. Ministers are taking a keen interest in the arrangements for vulnerable children and as such the DfE is monitoring the situation in every authority on a daily basis. These returns are helping the Local Authority to provide an accurate overview of the arrangements across the Isle of Wight, over and above the DfE daily return. They are enabling us to fulfil our responsibility in respect of monitoring vulnerable children's attendance in line with DfE guidance COVID19 Vulnerable Children and Young People (updated 1 April).

I am heartened to note that, from the returns we have so far, a good proportion of children and young people on a child protection plan are attending schools. This oversight will be providing a protective factor for those youngsters during these challenging times.

There have been a number of questions raised this week in relation to the return which we hope are answered in the frequently asked questions below.

1. When do I need to start doing the return?

Submit a return for week commencing 23 March as soon as you are able and before the return for the week of 30 March.

2. How often do I need to complete the return and when?

Every Friday, weekly (with the exception of Bank Holidays when we ask for the return on the next normal working day, please see further question below for Easter and potentially the early spring Bank Holiday).

3. Do I need to do a return for each week of the Easter Holiday?

Yes please. The government has asked that, where possible, provision for vulnerable children is maintained over the Easter period. We would therefore like to know, for social care purposes, which children are in attendance. We fully appreciate that for some of you this will remain a holiday period. If your school is closed and no children are accessing provision, please submit a nil return for each week. If your children are accessing a different provision not in your school's name, please indicate that in the notes section of the return. For the week commencing 6 April it is Good Friday, a Bank Holiday, on 10 April; therefore, please submit your return on the next normal working day, which is Tuesday 14 April.

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4. What do I do if I have a query?

If it is a technical issue about the form or its submission, please contact the Isle of Wight data team at IOWDAIT@IOW.GOV.UK

For a general query, please refer to your LLP or Natalie Smith natalie.smith2@hants.gov.uk, having first checked these FAQ's.

For a query relating to a specific child please contact the social worker but keep in mind that they are incredibly busy at the current time and, like all sectors, social care staffing is affected by COVID19.

If you need to make a referral, please use the usual process: do not include it with this return.

5. I don't know what the ICS number is so cannot complete this column of the return.

Apologies, this is a social care reference number and is not always known to schools; sometimes it is on documentation for the child, but many schools are not aware of it. Please therefore disregard this column on your return, as social care colleagues will populate it to match children to records, if they cannot do so using the name.

6. I am really worried about a child who is not attending, what should I do?

Go back to your original risk assessment of the child's vulnerability during this period. Talk to the parent/carer to attempt to secure the child's future attendance back at your provision; find out if there are barriers/concerns about COVID19 or otherwise which are preventing the parent accessing provision for their child and try to overcome them. Contact the child's social worker and be clear about why you are raising / escalating the concern.

If you have an immediate child protection concern you must refer to MASH in the usual way.

7. A child's name is not on the list, but I know he/she is open to social care.

Please add the name of the child to the return if he/she is in the category of Early Help, Child in Need, Child Protection or Child Looked After.

8. A child's name is on the list, but I did not know he/she was currently open to social care.

This may be due to a recent referral or a referral about another family member of which you are not yet aware. Please complete the attendance column and write in the notes section 'school not aware of social care involvement'.

9. What if a child has been referred but is not yet in the social care system?

If the child is not an open case in one of the four categories you do not need to put his/her name on the return; however you may wish to make a note for your own records and manage the child in the same way that you are managing other vulnerable children during COVID19.

10. Who is the social worker for child X on the list?

If you need to find out this information, please contact Yvonne White:
Yvonne.White@IOW.gov.uk

Please note that Yvonne can only answer queries about who is the named social worker and cannot talk to you about individual cases. If for any reason you are unable to contact Yvonne, please contact: CSC Admin Team CSCAdminTeam@iow.gov.uk

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11. Do I include children from another Local Authority?

No thank you. These children are not within our social care system and so we hold no records of them.

12. Do I include children who are adopted, on a special guardianship order or post looked after?

Only if they are currently open to social care, with a plan (for example a child in need plan).

13. Do I need to do a new return if nothing has changed since the previous week?

Yes please, simply check everything is the same and do a new return, just changing the date at the top.

14. Do I need to do a return if I have no children open to social care?

Yes please. Submit a 'nil return' via the school SharePoint site using the usual process. Please do this each week as situations may change.

15. What are social workers doing about these children; none of my vulnerable children who are not in school have had contact this week?

Social care colleagues are working tremendously hard at this time and the service is inevitably under pressure. As well as their usual workloads, we now have the majority of school-aged pupils and post-16 young people who are open to social care staying at home. School is no longer the same protective factor where we have daily sight of our most vulnerable. The social care workforce is also affected by COVID19. One of the reasons we are asking for this return is to help us monitor the vulnerable children across our collective system. It's really helpful therefore to know what contact, face to face or remotely, schools are having with each of their vulnerable children and families. Social care colleagues are prioritising their time and for this reason they may not be able to keep you fully updated on their contacts with families; they need to prioritise their time doing frontline work to keep children safe.

Thank you once again for your incredible work in supporting keyworkers and vulnerable children during the current time. My sincere appreciation to the many of you who will continue to work through the holiday period.

Finally, thank you for helping us to monitor our vulnerable children during COVID19, I know the vast majority of schools are in very regular contact with these children and their families, either through their direct access to provision or remotely.

Yours sincerely



Brian Pope
Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion