

## A Guide to Vulnerable Children & the Covid-19 School Attendance Plan

Due to the rapidly moving nature of current events please regularly refer to the latest government guidance on vulnerable learners <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people> & <https://cyps.northyorks.gov.uk/covid-19>

### Vulnerable Children:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children who have a child in need (CIN) plan, a child protection (CP) plan or who are a looked after child (LAC)
- have an education, health and care (EHC) plan whose needs cannot be met safely in the home environment
- have been assessed as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including Children's Social Care services), and who are therefore in need of continued education provision

This might include children on the edge of receiving support from Children's Social Care, adopted children, or those who are young carers, and others at the provider and Local Authority discretion.

**Children with a Social Worker:** Practitioners should encourage vulnerable children and young people to attend educational settings unless they decide that the child is at less risk at home or in their placement, for example, due to underlying health conditions. The suggested multi-agency discussion and the Vulnerable Children's Attendance Plan (outlined below) will be useful in decision-making processes during Covid-19.

**Early Help:** Some children open to the service will be classed as vulnerable learners, but not all. It is recommended that practitioners use the existing RAG rating documents to help identify those children considered vulnerable and exercise their discretion (this is likely to be all children whose cases are categorised as red, and a proportion of those cases classified as amber).

**Children with an education, health and care (EHC) plan:** Practitioners should work with educational providers, families and the child or young person to carry out a risk assessment to judge whether the child or young person's needs can be met safely at home. The risk assessment will determine whether it is safer for the child to attend school or if it is more appropriate for them to be at home. The risk assessment template can be found [here](#).

**Awaiting an EHCP:** These children do not automatically fall within the definition of 'vulnerable children', therefore, the decision to undertake a risk assessment is at the discretion of the educational setting and social worker/LA. Support can then be offered if required.

**Following up on-attendance:** Schools and settings should monitor attendance, explore reasons for absence and notify the social worker where appropriate. Where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at school or college or discontinues, the provider should notify their social worker.

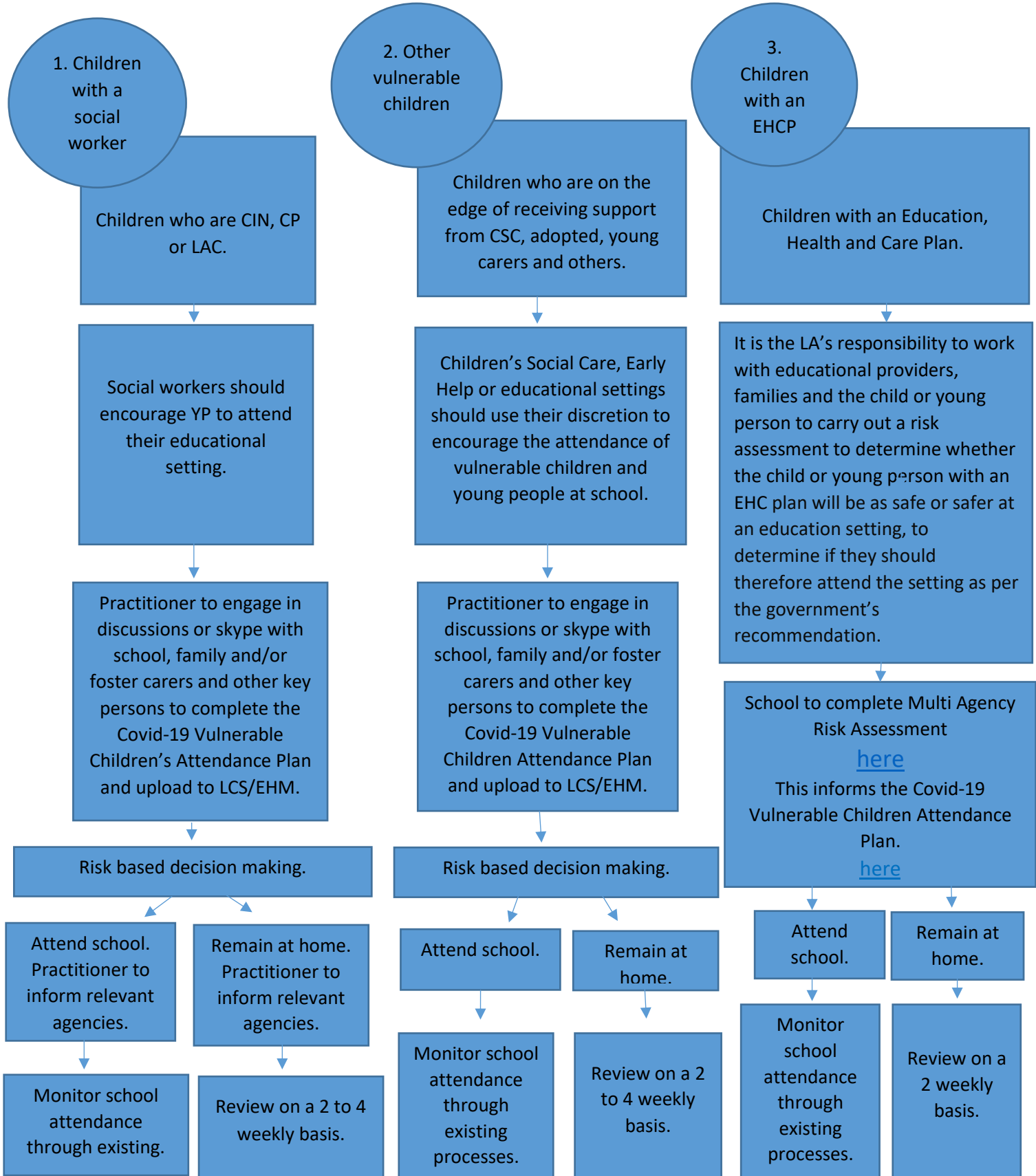
**Online learning & IT:** Digital devices and 4G dongles will soon be made available for some disadvantaged Year 10 pupils, care leavers and school children with social workers who do not already have a device and children in secondary school with social workers who do not have internet access. There will also be increased support around online learning with resources being made available through platforms such as the Oak National Academy. *Further guidance to follow.*

**For practitioners working with children and young people open to the Children & Families service and not receiving their usual education offer, a process map can be found below to further explain vulnerable children's access to education.**

Note: The government encourages vulnerable children and young people to attend educational settings unless they have underlying health conditions that put them at severe risk. Clear communication is needed from the LA (e.g. Early Help) with education providers if vulnerable learners need to access education provision. This is to ensure staffing is sufficient and well prepared.

**Important**

For Children who are in category 1 & 2 below but also have an EHCP (Government guidance requires the school to complete a Risk Assessment) use the school Risk Assessment to capture the information required for the Vulnerable Children's Attendance Plan



## **Covid-19 Vulnerable Children's Attendance Plan**

### **Aim**

The purpose of the plan is to ensure consideration is given to everyone's views when making the best decision about a child/young person's education provision during Covid-19. All vulnerable children/young people should be encouraged to attend school however, there are a number of factors to be considered.

### **Why is this so important?**

Our young people may be feeling even more vulnerable due to the stress of the pandemic and need as much structure, reassurance and security as possible. Their raised stress will often give rise to increased defensive responses e.g. flight (running away, going out, refusals), fight (conflict) or freeze, this can put tremendous pressure on placements. Schools also have the pressures of safety, trying to provide as much support as possible, often with challenging staffing issues. Each setting needs to be understanding of the pressure that the other is under, but also be aware of their expected responsibilities. By placing the child at the centre of your discussion you will find a way forward together. Home, social care and school all want the best for the young person.

### **Vulnerable Children's Attendance Plan**

To facilitate these multi-agency discussions, we have developed a template you can utilise throughout the decision making process. The template can be completed as part of a Skype meeting or through a series of discussions with the child/young person, parents/carers and education setting. The completed template must be shared with those involved and relevant agencies must be updated on the plans for the young person. The template can be found here [Link to Vulnerable Children's Attendance Plan](#)



# COVID-19 Vulnerable Children's Attendance Plan

	What's Working Well	What are we worried about	Next Steps
Home			
School/Setting/ Training Provider			
Social Care (incl. Early Help) & Virtual School (if LAC)			
Child			

Child's Name:

DOB:

LCS P No: