**Update with regard to Nursery Plus approach to outreach during lockdown (based on current guidance which may change) November 2020**

**Rationale**

As a service our purpose is to support children across our local community to achieve age related expectation on entry to school or ensure that the appropriate provision is in place and progress has been made for children with more significant needs.

During lockdown we have endeavoured to continue to provide as much support and ongoing provision as possible. One of the key approaches of Nursery Plus is to provide continuous onsite visits in the child’s setting but this has been severely impacted, in the first instance by children not attending settings and now, with the second lockdown the recognition that all of us have a duty to reduce contacts to minimise transmission.

We are however working within a sector that is currently operating to ensure children can access their education and this includes access to additional services for children with SEND.

**National Guidance**

We have reviewed the [*Guidance for full opening of schools*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#contents) *and identified some key points to consider:*

In the current guidance it is clear that in general the expectation is:

*Specialists, therapists, clinicians and other support staff for pupils with SEND should provide interventions as usual. (Prevention: 6e – Other Considerations)*

However the document also references:

**The system of control:**

6) Minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible

**Essential measures include:**

* a requirement that people who are ill stay at home
* robust hand and respiratory hygiene
* enhanced cleaning and ventilation arrangements
* active engagement with NHS Test and Trace
* formal consideration of how to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in school wherever possible and minimise the potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable

**Approach to risk estimation and management**

Schools should work through the following steps to address their risks, considering for each risk whether there are measures in each step they can adopt before moving onto the next step:

1. Elimination: stop an activity that is not considered essential if there are risks attached.
2. Substitution: replace the activity with another that reduces the risk. Care is required to avoid introducing new hazards due to the substitution.
3. Engineering controls: design measures that help control or mitigate risk.
4. Administrative controls: identify and implement the procedures to improve safety (for example, markings on the floor, signage).
5. Having gone through this process, PPE should be used in circumstances where the guidance says it is required.

**Outreach Approach**

We have therefore reviewed the way we balance the expectation that children should access support and the need to reduce contacts to minimise transmission.

Overarching Approach

* All Nursery Plus bases should endeavour to continue to provide face to face outreach visits where it is deemed to be necessary by the Nursery Plus teacher in discussion with Babcock LDP and base school leadership
* Each base should consider an individualised approach based on their staffing, case load and context
* Staff who are clinically vulnerable or extremely vulnerable should not undertake outreach and should follow guidance of the base school as to what work should be undertaken within the school
* Nursery Plus provision should be offered remotely for all other outreach cases to ensure that children on the case load continue to benefit from the professional expertise and support Nursery Plus provide as far as possible
* Nursery Plus teachers will provide a planned timetable for each member of staff
* Staff will not visit more than 2 settings per week including base nursery, where possible these visits should be blocked together to provide as much continuity and to replicate working in bubbles

Identifying which children should access face to face outreach

Nursery Plus teachers should discuss their case load with their teams and consider whether any of the children on the case load meet the suggested characteristics that make them vulnerable at this time

A child would be seen as vulnerable where:

* The child meets Nursery Plus criteria for a ‘B’ child
* They are at risk of exclusion or the setting are finding it difficult to include the child and ensure they are accessing their education entitlement
* They are on a pathway for Multi-disciplinary assessment, EHCP or on waiting lists for further assessments
* They have multiple needs that are unclear and unmet
* They are on the child protection register or are a child in need
* Child in care or adopted

Once these children have been identified then these children should be considered against the criteria for whether a visit is essential to ensure that child is kept safe and their needs met.

A visit might be deemed essential where

* The setting perceives the needs of the child as being significantly challenging and are struggling to include
* The Nursery Plus staff identifies that the child is likely to need regular, specific support to make progress
* The gathering of evidence to inform further assessment and ensure successful to transition to school will be significantly impacted by delay until January
* The child is in a setting which particularly impacts on their particular needs due to the learning environment and staffing levels
* There are groups of children who fit into the vulnerable category in a setting who can be seen at the same time or through blocking visits within a week.

Not all children who are identified as vulnerable will need to receive face to face visits and remote working will always be the default option where possible.

**Managing the children who were offered a place for this half term**

Due to the summer lockdown the referral rate had dropped significantly so the service offered an interim admissions panel to accept new children at autumn half term.

These children are not currently known to the team and normally they would carry out initial visits to meet the setting and get to know the child and their needs. During this lockdown period the team may carry out initial observations using the following guidance:

* Initial telephone conversation to review the needs of the child, consider the setting approach and identify where any initial advice and guidance can be offered
* Carry out an observation in the setting following the usual expectations around the system of controls, following the Nursery Plus Outreach Risk assessment and the additional guidance below:
  + Keep the time in the setting to a minimum
  + One observation per day and a maximum of 2 observations per week. Do not visit other settings on these days. This would be additional to outreach and/or support for the base nursery in the week.
  + Do not interact with the child – ask a member of staff to interact and engage with the child if you wish to observe language and social interactions
  + Maintain 2 m distance from staff and children at all times
  + Observe the child in the outside area where possible
  + Do not provide any face to face feedback during the visit – telephone the setting when you return

If following this visit the child fits the vulnerable characteristics staff should review whether ongoing face to face delivery is required and consider whether it is possible to fit into the timetable.

**Summary**

Our aim is to continue to provide a service that supports all children in Devon who are offered a Nursery Plus place. We have reviewed the national guidance and considered aligning the approach with Babcock LDP and DCC services whilst considering the similarities and differences and mitigating for the risks in the case of the Nursery Plus team. Schools are ultimately responsible for their employees but must ensure that they enable Nursery Plus staff to carry out the duties as far as is practicable and within the parameters of the risk assessment and this guidance. Where outreach is not being provided through face to face make every endeavour should be made to support the setting and the child remotely.