

COVID Email Update 13 September 2021 (dyslexia friendly version)

Good morning to you all, I hope you and your families are doing okay.

I'm so sorry there has been a 2-week delay since my last weekly update. The reason has been the Afghanistan crisis response and I've set out more about this below.

Afghanistan Crisis Response

You may have seen in the news that following the evacuation from Afghanistan, there are hundreds of refugees staying in temporary accommodation hotels in London. This includes a significant number of children. The hotels have been opened by the Home Office as somewhere for the refugees to stay until longer-term resettlement accommodation is available across the UK. These temporary accommodation hotels are known as bridging hotels, and some are in Camden.

Family Early Help has been part of the crisis response since the first day that Afghan refugees began to arrive in our borough just over 2 weeks ago. We've just completed our 3rd weekend oncall working alongside emergency management, temporary accommodation staff, the hotel staff, NHS and local community groups to get essential items to children and families so their basic material needs are met. We are also part of the emergency command structure that has been put in place to manage the crisis response.

I cannot tell you how many times I have felt an incredible pride for the way our Camden community and its organisations has responded to this crisis. Camden has proved yet again that this is a place where help is for everyone who needs it, from anyone who wants to give it.

I will put a whole service briefing in your calendars for later this week so I can tell you more about the situation and the ways it might affect family support work. There are some unique circumstances for the Afghan refugees in the bridging hotels that are very different

to residents in the other Home Office contingency hotels. **If you find yourself working with a family staying in any of the Home Office hotels, please contact me so I can help and link you into the wider response.** I will also put a new section on the Afghanistan crisis response on the Guidebook later this week.

As ever, whether a child calls Camden home for 7 days or 17 years, we will love them and do our very best for them so they can feel they are living safe and well. The reality of that is often very complicated, but the principle is not. I have complete confidence that value will be upheld in our work with Afghan refugee families, who have experienced so much trauma already.

Updates for you this week:

Return to School – COVID

The national COVID guidance to schools has now changed, and you can find a link to it, including a summary of the changes, on the Guidebook here <https://ascpractice.camden.gov.uk/early-help-guide/family-early-help-covid-guidebook/schools/returning-to-school-after-lockdowns/#main> . Camden and Islington Public Health have also produced a guide for parents about returning to school, which you can find on the Guidebook on the same link.

Ofsted Preparation – Update

Thanks to everyone who was able to come at short notice to the briefing sessions on preparing for an Ofsted inspection. If you weren't able to make it, the slide pack is attached, so please have a look through. We'll be sending round more information about inspection, including Top Tips for Meeting with Inspectors, later this week and there will be lots of opportunity to discuss it in your team meetings.

Whilst there is lots of activity going on to get ready for an Ofsted inspection, my ask of you is simply to keep your focus exactly where it needs to be – on the children and families we help and the work you do with them. We exist to serve Camden children and families and that's what matters most, all the time.

Updated Stepdown Protocol

Our process for receiving step downs from social care has been updated. This reflects learning from recent audits about what's working and what could be better. Please do take a few minutes to read the refreshed protocol and talk with your manager if you have any questions about it. You can find it on the Guidebook here <https://ascpractice.camden.gov.uk/media/2901/step-down-protocol-updated-september-2021.pdf>

Many of you know I have a bit of an allergic reaction to the term 'step down' because I'm not a fan of labels (they're not a helpful or respectful way to refer to families, and I don't imagine any of us would ever wish to be referred to as 'a stepdown'). Step down really means who is going to help this family on the next part of their journey to feeling stronger, and doing it in a helpful, timely and dignified way. Hold that in mind as you read the protocol!

Data Breaches

There have been a couple of data breaches in the service recently, where confidential information has been shared with people who didn't need it. Can I ask you all to take a few minutes to revisit the steps you can take to prevent a data breach and what to do, if a data breach occurs, on the Guidebook here <https://ascpractice.camden.gov.uk/early-help-guide/family-early-help-covid-guidebook/technology-for-workers/data-protection/> .

Disability Month – Request for Stories

Disability Month is coming up in November, and Emma Chimonidou is on the look out for stories to help raise the profile of disabled children and families in Camden. More info attached, please contact Emma if you have a contribution. As ever, lets stay mindful that a family story is theirs to tell, and we must both ask their permission before we share their story and create spaces so they can tell their story, in their way, with their voice.

Reporting Abuse and Discrimination At Work

Camden has refreshed its process for reporting discrimination at work. This includes racism, ableism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, sexism and all other forms of discriminatory behaviour. You can find the reporting procedure on Essentials here <https://lbcamden.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/communications/Pages/reporting-accidents-incidents-and-discrimination-at-work.aspx>

In early October, I'll be sharing an update on the work of our Racial Justice and Equity Organising Committee and the progress made on the goals we set ourselves as a service. Its really good to see the continued energy going into this work, which remains a big priority for the service into the autumn.

Weekly Survey

This week's family needs survey, for you to raise any issues you're seeing and noticing for families and anything you might need yourself, is now open here [FSCF FAMILY NEEDS SURVEY W/C 13 SEPTEMBER 2021](#)

New information uploaded to the COVID Guidebook this week link here <https://ascpractice.camden.gov.uk/early-help-guide/family-early-help-covid-guidebook/>

<p>New Guidance for Schools and Return to School Booklet for Parents</p> <p>Link to updated COVID guidance for schools and a booklet for parents on returning to school</p> <p>https://ascpractice.camden.gov.uk/early-help-guide/family-early-help-covid-guidebook/schools/returning-to-school-after-lockdowns/#main</p>		
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We are now in week 78 of COVID and our capacity is currently steady. A warm welcome back to those of you who are just returning to work. We are about to start recruitment for some additional staff to fill vacant posts and to help increase our overall capacity in readiness for the autumn/winter period.

Stay safe and well and, as ever, shout me if there is anything you need.

Becca

Becca Dove

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