**Principles for in person visits, support and Family Time**

Widespread introduction of COVID Local Alert Level Tier 3 in the North West and subsequent announcement of new national restrictions introduced on 5 November, created the scope to establish principles for safe, consistent delivery of in person social work activities.

**Principles**

* In person visits to children, young people and families should, in all cases, be considered an essential part of the social work task, with virtual arrangements being implemented by exception.
* Family Time, including with brothers and sisters, should similarly be considered essential to promote wellbeing and nurture positive relationships. This is specifically exempted under national restrictions (See [Exception 13](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/1200/regulation/11/made)) and ‘Very High’ (LAL3) restrictions (see [Exception 3](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/1105/schedule/1/paragraph/4/made))
* No ‘blanket approach’ should to be applied to the use of [virtual visits](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-childrens-social-care-services/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-childrens-social-care#virtual-visits---local-authorities) all decisions for virtual visits/[Family Time](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-childrens-social-care-services/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-childrens-social-care#courts) must be made, authorised and recorded on a case-by-case basis (in line with [*Coronavirus guidance for children’s social care services*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-childrens-social-care-services/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-childrens-social-care))
* Travel by social workers and other children’s workforce within and between areas during national restrictions and, where relevant, under differing Local Alert Levels should continue where needed to deliver essential services (See [Exception 3](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/1105/schedule/1/paragraph/4/made)).
* Support, including for vulnerable children, victims of domestic abuse and for parenting ([Exception 5](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/1105/schedule/1/paragraph/4/made)); in addition to respite for Looked After Children and children with disabilities ([Exception 6](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/1105/schedule/1/paragraph/4/made)) should continue safely, in line with relevant regulatory exceptions to national restrictions.

**Practical considerations**

* Seeking and recording [views of children and young people](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-childrens-social-care-services/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-childrens-social-care#courts) and the impact on them should inform the approach to decision-making in all cases.
* Dynamic [risk-based](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-childrens-social-care-services/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-childrens-social-care#childrens-social-care) decisions (considering symptomatic/isolating members of households) and case-specific risk assessment (particularly for clinically extremely vulnerable children/carers) should inform safe decision-making for children, parents/carers and the workforce.
* Protection of those considered [clinically extremely vulnerable](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19#cev) under revised definition issued by Government – whether children, their families/carers or the social work and wider workforce - should be a key consideration in practical application of principles, regulations and guidance.