

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE FAMILIES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Children's Services

OPERATING FRAMEWORK



BUSINESS AS USUAL BUT RESPONDING IN DIFFERENT WAYS

Totally Virtual

Blended

Non-virtual

EVERY CASE WAS SCREENED AND ASSESSED

WORKING THROUGH CV-19 (RISK ASSESSMENTS)

Can the 'visit' be done virtually?

- What are the risks (balancing act)
- Are there any specific issues / risks / vulnerabilities within this family?
- What is the purpose of the visit and desired outcome?
- What are the specific needs in this case?
- What is the benefits of conducting the 'visit' one way or the other?
- Discussing with managers / other agencies
- Who else is / is not seeing this child / young person / family?

If the answer is 'NO' what is the safest way we can undertake that visit?

- Staff safety and citizen safety at forefront
- Creative ways of 'seeing' and being with people
- Use blended approaches
- Use of PPE
- Help the family keep everyone safe during visits with clear and specific instructions

EARLY HELP

- Advice line set up within 2 days of lockdown- 154 calls from March- September
- Close connectivity with other colleagues/team in CS and wider
- Virtual Early Help Panel continued throughout lockdown and resource packs distributed to families/young people via email
- Virtual sessions in Building Stronger Families/family therapy/ individual therapy
- Online counselling service set up and offered for extended hours
- Virtual transition groups during the summer holidays
- Virtual Circle of Security / NVR groups for parents
- Virtual Network meetings with colleagues from health to continue Multi-Disciplinary Team approach
- Virtual 'drop in' sessions during summer holidays for Young People
- Social Media presence and resource creation/distribution

WORKING WITH CHILDREN AT RISK OF HARM

- Front-door fully operational with no drop in referral rate
- Child protection inquiries carried out
- Statutory visits for children on the Child Protection Register continued via risk assessment approach
- Care plans were progressed through our usual range of interventions for families, parents, children and young people
- Worked in partnership with CYP to make places available in school hubs for vulnerable families
- Ensuring children were supported to engage in home schooling
- Court work continued and court hearings were attended - some cases were concluded but far from all...
- Children were introduced to adoptive placements
- Intense support was provided to young people returning home

FAMILY SUPPORT

- Mix of virtual and face to face depending on the need
- Creative adjustments seeing people outside/in gardens (where appropriate)
- Face to face work carefully considered, risk assessed
- Working with food banks/community team to support our most vulnerable
- Sharing of practice amongst teams to use virtual methods
- Virtual Family Group Conferences and Mediation work
- Sharing of resources amongst family support to prevent extra work or duplication
- Communication with other agencies to ensure a sequenced and joined up approach for families and young people

SUPPORTING FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

- Worked in partnership with Action For Children to provide intensive support to families at risk of breakdown
- In some cases social workers provided daily contacts and calls to parents for emotional support
- Worked with CYP to enable CWD to access school hubs
- Used our salaried carers to provide day respite
- Provided a summer play-scheme at 3 sites
- Started up virtual 'fun-clubs'
- Conducted the 'business as usual' work of the team (referrals, transitions)
- Helped families use their Direct Payments creatively

SUPPORTING FOSTER CARERS AND FINDING PLACEMENTS

- Telephone support to foster carers
- Creating a weekly newsletter to keep foster carers connected
- Supported foster carers with virtual introductions where placement moves were needed
- Continued to promote fostering and recruit foster carers.
- Undertaken assessments through a blended approach including a minimum of two home visits (subject to risk assessment)
- Fostering Panel continued on virtual platform and panel training has been undertaken virtually via Teams.
- Skills to Foster training is being delivered virtually via Zoom over 6 evenings at the end of October.

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE EXPERIENCED

- Right from the outset, supported children and parents to spend time together virtually
- In some cases parents came to the family time centres to use computers and mobile phones
- All children are now having some face to face time with their families, as well as virtual
- Continued to undertake our contacts and visits with children who are looked after (subject to risk assessments)
- Supported new placements where this was required
- Lots of contact with care experienced young people prioritising those who were particularly isolated or vulnerable
- Mobile phone tops-ups so that isolated young people could keep in touch
- Supported young people with Covid-19 advice, accommodation, employment and benefit issues

BARRIERS, CHALLENGES & HIDDEN BENEFITS

Being in lockdown was so isolating....

Joining as a new social worker was so strange...not being able to see the children on my case load... it was difficult

Parenting sessions on-line felt difficult at first but I got used to it.

The level of attendance at consultation and panel meetings has been better than ever

Young people were more available and keen to engage

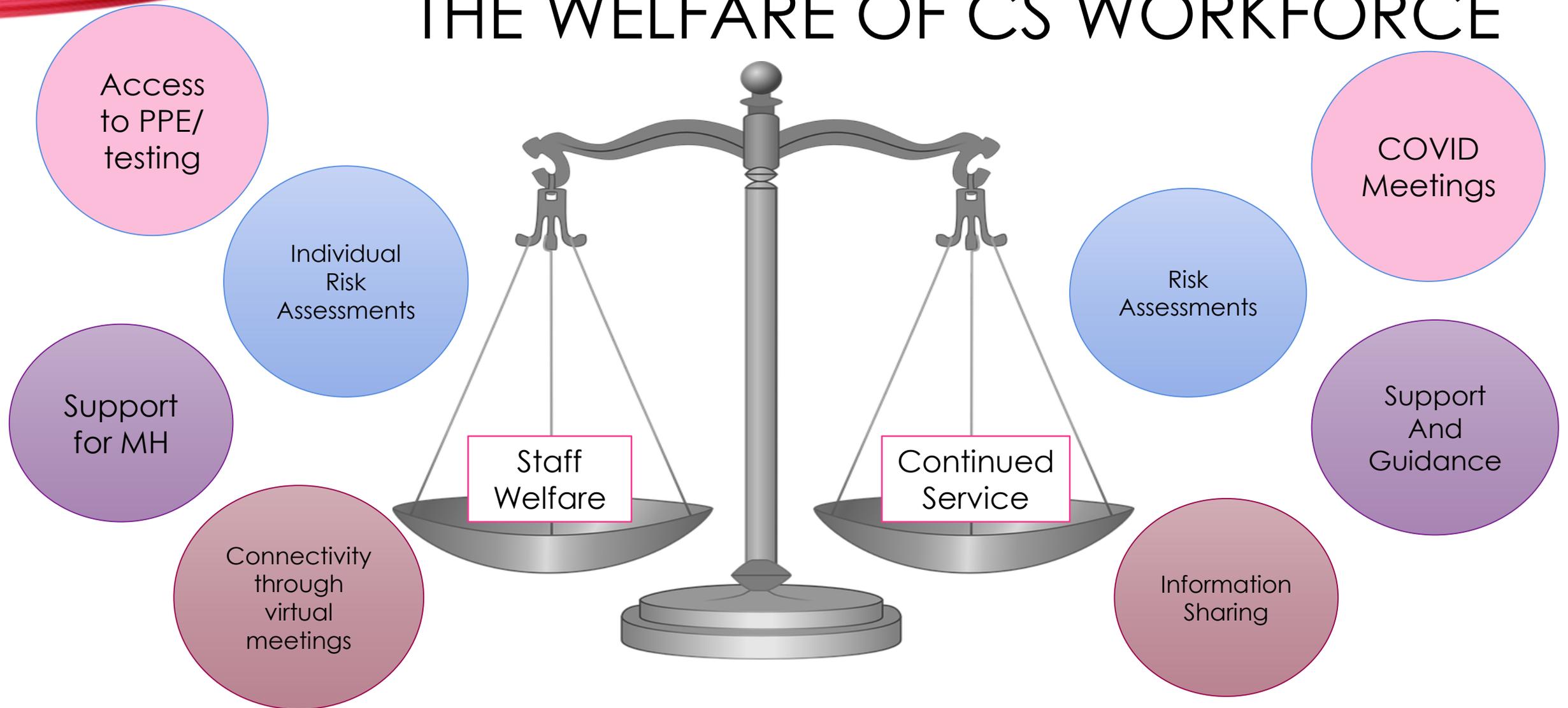
Virtual endings ...how do you do these well?!

...it was a really difficult session, and I was sort of left with it in my house

I enjoyed spending time with my foster family without the pressure of school

The team has never felt so connected

THE WELFARE OF CS WORKFORCE





KEEPING ON KEEPING ON

- Adapting and responding to the 'ease up' of restrictions
- Keeping abreast of changes and the local situation
- Monitoring demand, emerging themes and the impact of the continued situation on families
- What do we do about Christmas!!!
- The issue of resilience within the workforce
- Not losing what we have learned so far about operating in these conditions
- Keeping culture, practice and the values that drive the service