

8th April 2020

Letter to Principal Social Workers

Dear colleagues

I became the President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services last week and I am writing this from my kitchen table, a way of working that like many of you I have got used to over the last couple of weeks. These are extraordinary and challenging times for us all and especially so for the children, young people and families that social workers support and enable to live their lives safely. However, children and young people's social workers are familiar with overcoming challenges and it is these skills and experience that will be our greatest assets in the coming weeks and months. Indeed they have inspired and supported me through my 34 years as a social worker (can hardly believe it's 34 years - the time has gone so fast!)

Social work values have probably never been so important. Empowerment, inclusion, respect and an ability to appreciate lived experiences will be at the heart of our responses. Creativity in being able to continue working with children and families when face to face contact may not always be possible has quickly helped activities to continue using technology and the PSW Digital research will assist in capturing this practice while the PSW best practice guides offer helpful support and guidance for practitioners in frontline services.

Social work's strong heritage of partnership working with a range of colleagues in the police, voluntary sector, schools and especially our health partners at this time will not only support families and communities and will also help awareness of safeguarding concerns in online safety, domestic abuse and exploitation.

As social workers we listen and promote the voice and wishes of children and young people in every aspect of our practice. During this current crisis children's voices must be heard and the impact of their lived experience acknowledged and acted upon as we move forward. Social workers will be at the forefront of doing this.

And in all the hard work to adapt and work differently, we must not neglect our own health and wellbeing and that of our teams. Easy to say and not so easy to do at times!

With very best wishes

Yours sincerely



Jenny Coles
ADCS President & Director of Children's Services
Hertfordshire County Council