

Safeguarding Vulnerable Children During Heatwaves and Early School Closure

Where schools are considering early closure or amended arrangements during periods of extreme heat, particular consideration should be given to children who may be vulnerable due to safeguarding concerns or social care involvement.

This may include children who are:

- Subject to Child Protection Plans.
- Children in Need.
- Children looked after or previously looked after.
- Young carers.
- Pupils known to be vulnerable due to neglect, exploitation, parental substance misuse, mental health difficulties, or other safeguarding concerns.

Before implementing early closure arrangements, schools should:

- Identify pupils who may be at increased safeguarding risk if required to leave school earlier than usual.
- Consider whether parents or carers are aware of and able to safely accommodate revised arrangements.
- Ensure that children are not sent home to an unsuitable or unsafe environment.
- Liaise with parents, carers, social workers, virtual school teams, or other professionals where concerns exist.
- Review individual risk assessments and safeguarding plans where necessary.
- Maintain clear records of decisions and actions taken for vulnerable pupils.

Where concerns exist regarding a child's safety or supervision, schools should consider whether alternative arrangements can be made, including allowing the pupil to remain on site until normal collection times where this is safe and practicable.

Designated Safeguarding Leads / Designated Teachers should be involved in decision-making regarding vulnerable children affected by any changes to the school day. Schools should continue to fulfil their safeguarding duties and work with partner agencies where concerns arise.

Any decision to amend the school day should balance the risks associated with extreme heat alongside the potential safeguarding impact on vulnerable children.