

Safeguarding in the COVID-19 world of 2020



Alison Brown
Advocate

Introduction

It is unimaginable that there is any household in Jersey that has not been affected by the current situation. Businesses have closed, one hopes temporarily, and adults, vulnerable adults and children find themselves in much closer proximity to each other than usual, and since the restriction on movement, for extended periods of time. This in itself will bring pressure, friction and flashpoints into the home environment, in all likelihood fuelled by financial anxieties about which nothing can currently be done. Such situations heighten risk.

- There are two significant safeguarding considerations for those organisations and their employees where work functions are continuing:

Will employees come into contact with vulnerable adults or children? This might apply to care providers' own premises but also where care is given within a domestic setting; existing employees may have had Police checks but as the workforce becomes affected by covid 19 reinforcements may be needed.

It is essential to protect the business and vulnerable people by undertaking a risk assessment. An assessment must be made of the likelihood of such contact occurring and steps taken to safeguard.

Is the correct employee available to attend, if not what steps should be taken to provide the required service? If a new member of staff is to be deployed are they appropriately trained and police checked? In addition does the organisations' policies cover the situation where an employee becomes aware of safeguarding issues which may need to be reported to the appropriate agency?

The organisation should consider these issues when any change from previous working practice needs to take place and it is advisable that a register is kept to evidence the change; the risk assessment and the steps taken to mitigate risk/safeguard.

- A consideration mainly for the employee but which may well impinge on the employee's efficiency and therefore the business: The arrangements made by the employees for their dependents enabling them to go to work. Those children must be safely cared for enabling the employee to fully commit to their employment. If those children are being cared for by neighbours; friend's parents or the other parent of the household, is it safe?

The Government of Jersey has addressed this in two ways. It has made provision for the children of critical workers to still attend school, nursery or childminders.

This provision is to enable the parents to work rather than seeking to educate those children, a stark reminder of these difficult times and the need for the health service, government, communications, utilities the police and the emergency services to remain functioning. The Government of Jersey has commented that the take up of places is quite low at the moment, showing parents' commitment to staying at home whenever possible and commends and encourages employers to enable this wherever possible.

The other measure is the Children and Families Hub. A single point of contact for those people who may be feeling overwhelmed by their situation. There have been 24 calls since Monday 23 March when it was set up. Contact childrenandfamilieshub@gov.je or telephone 01534 519000.

BCR Law recognise the commitment of those critical workers and those providing care for their children.

This briefing is only intended to give a summary of the subject matter. It does not constitute legal advice. Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact:

Advocate Alison Brown
alison.brown@bcrlawllp.com
+44 (0) 1534 760879