

Leadership Alert Policy and Guidance

The Leadership Alert policy is an internal process within Children, Lifelong Learning and Families Directorate only

Last Review: August 2023

This policy and guidance is for all employees in the Children, Lifelong Learning and Families Directorate.

Summary

The internal Leadership Alert process underpins how the Children, Lifelong Learning and Families Directorate manages serious incidents concerning the safety, welfare and education of children and young people and incidents where there is potential media interest even where the incident itself is not sufficiently serious to warrant a Leadership Alert.

The Leadership Alert process provides an effective and clear communication route for keeping senior leaders, the Chief Executive, Cabinet Members for Children's Services and Education, the Leader of the Council and other elected Members informed and for required actions to be tracked.

Employees completing Leadership Alerts should attach the completed Leadership Alert form to an email and send to their line manager for review and onward escalation as necessary. Where an Assistant Director forwards a Leadership Alert to the Director of Children's Services all members of DMT will be emailed with the Leadership Alert attached.

Within the internal Leadership Alert process, the Director of Children's Services (or in their absence the Assistant Director) will make the decision as to what will be escalated to the Chief Executive, Cabinet Members for Children's Services and Education, the Leader of the Council and other elected Members.

All child deaths when they become known by a service – regardless of the presence of abuse/neglect or the child's care status – should be reported immediately to the team or service manager, and then on to the Head of Service. On the same day, the Head of Service should notify their Assistant Director, who will alert the CLLF Departmental Management Team. DMT will take steps to share or escalate the information as appropriate.

Statutory notification of serious incidents to external bodies such as Ofsted, DfE or the National Review Panel are made under different processes. These processes are managed and overseen by the Director of Children's Services, Assistant Directors and the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive. The Director Children's Services (or in their absence the Assistant Director) will make the decision as to which incidents meet the criteria to be notified to external bodies.

Why Do We Need a Leadership Alert Process?

When something serious happens for a child or that involves children, the internal Leadership Alert process provides a clear and controlled route for sharing and escalating information to the right people so that as a Directorate:

- we take appropriate action to consider the safety and wellbeing of the young person and any other child associated with the incident
- we take appropriate action to consider the safety and wellbeing of employees and any additional support that may be required

Leadership Alert Policy and Guidance

- there are clear actions and reviews of the management of those risks in accordance with internal, statutory and corporate responsibilities
- accurate and timely information is shared with Heads of Service, Assistant Directors and the Director Children's Services.
- the Director of Children's Services (or in their absence the Assistant Director) is able to determine what information is shared promptly with the Corporate Leadership Team, key agencies and elected members.

When should a Leadership Alert be used?

A Leadership Alert should be completed in the following scenarios:

- The death of a child or young person who is resident and open to Merton Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion services
- Any death of a child or young person who is looked after by Merton Children's Social Care, or a child looked after by another local authority who is living within the borough of Merton at the time of their death.
- Children Looked After and those subject to child protection plans who are removed from the jurisdiction of England and Wales when that removal is not planned or agreed.
- Children Looked After and those subject to child protection plans who have been missing for more than 48 hours. **However, where the child or young person is considered at high risk or being missing is an unusual or unexpected behaviour this would require an immediate completion of a Leadership Alert.**
- Children where there is a reasonable suspicion of organised and complex abuse or exploitation of a child. This would include ritual abuse, abuse of a child in a school or education setting (including pre-school), sexual exploitation, trafficking, or criminal exploitation of multiple children by adults.
- Where a young person known to Merton Children, Lifelong Learning and Families has been alleged to have committed or has been charged with a serious offence(s) for example murder, manslaughter, rape, terrorism or a serious gang related offence.
- Where a child or young person known to Merton Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion services have, during the period of Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion involvement, become the victim of a serious offence.
- Where information about a child or young person has raised significant public safety concerns or their actions have impacted on other services and the community.
- Where significant concerns about a care provider in a residential setting are made known or where a residential care home or care placement, or residential or independent school has been judged inadequate and LB Merton has young people placed there.
- Situations where there is likely to be media, MP, councillor interest or impact for another service. This would include community or serious youth violence issues that impact on the local community.
- Serious allegations against staff where there is significant reputational risk to the Council or where serious allegations of abuse against staff/carers are made or substantiated.

What is the process for making a Leadership Alert?

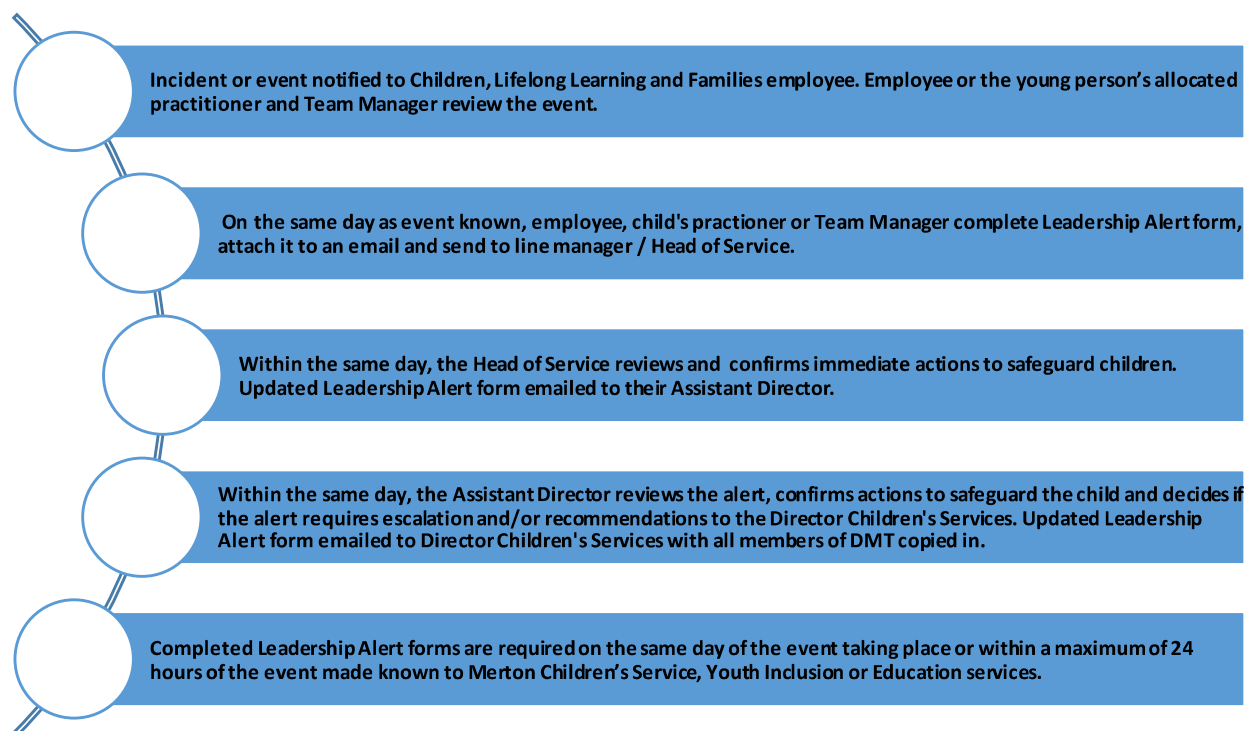
Leadership Alert Policy and Guidance

When an employee in Children, Lifelong Learning and Families becomes aware of an incident or event which meets the Leadership Alert criteria they should immediately share this information with their Team Manager.

Where the child or children involved in the incident have an allocated practitioner the employee and/or their Team Manager should make immediate contact with the allocated practitioner or their Team Manager to share the information. It will usually be most appropriate for the allocated practitioner and their Team Manager to complete the Leadership Alert.

Completion of the Leadership alert must not be delayed if it has not been possible to make immediate contact with an allocated practitioner or Team Manager. In this scenario, the employee who became aware of the incident or event should complete the Leadership Alert.

Completed Leadership Alerts are to be emailed to the employees' Head of Service.



Statutory Notifications to Ofsted, DFE or the National Review Panel

- The Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families (or in their absence the Assistant Director) will consider the decision as to what is escalated to the Chief Executive and confirm any recommendations for onward transmission to senior colleagues, elected members and partner agencies where required.
- The Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families (or in their absence the Assistant Director) would confirm the decision for a notification to the Secretary of State and Ofsted for individual events. This would specifically relate to incidents as set out in the Working Together <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Leadership Alert Policy and Guidance

- Where there is a potential media interest, the Head of Service and communications team in conjunction with the Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families and the Assistant Director, will draft an internal briefing note suitable for sharing with elected members.

Recording of Leadership Alerts:

- All Leadership Alert forms will cross-reference management oversight in the child's record by the allocated practitioner and Team Manager. **The Leadership Alert form will be completed within 24 hours of the incident taking place** and reflect oversight by the relevant Head of Service.
- The form will be updated as required and shared as above when additional actions or decisions are requested.
- All Leadership Alerts are to be recorded using the designated Leadership Alert form and sending it electronically as an email attachment.
- The Head of Service will confirm action taken, the reduction of any further risks to the young people and others (including brothers, sisters and peers) and the date when an update is expected and who to contact for further details
- There may be occasions where a Leadership Alert is completed and sent with only brief information when the speed of the alert is critical or full details of the incident are not yet known. As more information becomes available, the Head of Service will oversee updating of information and actions within the Leadership Alert form and be responsible for sharing the updated alert as requested by the Assistant Director / Director Children's Services.