

Children's Services Serious Incident Notification Policy (‘Need to Know’)

1 Background

It is important that senior managers and senior Councillors are briefed at the right time about the right issues. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, so that they are aware of serious incidents regarding the safety, welfare and/or education of a child or young person and are able to oversee the proper management of those risks in accordance with statutory responsibilities. Secondly, effective organisations ensure that the senior team is always well briefed about important issues in advance so that they are well placed to respond to enquiries from other Councillors, the press or partner agencies.

Sometimes it is a matter of fine judgement whether an issue is sufficiently serious to inform the Service Director for Safeguarding and Family Support, however there are a number of circumstances where the Service Director should **always** be informed. If you are in any doubt, always discuss it with your line manager or the senior manager on duty.

The Service Director will take the decision as to whether and what needs to be escalated further to the Corporate Director for Children and Young People or to the Chief Executive in the Corporate Directors' absence.

The Corporate Director will be responsible for onward transmission to other senior colleagues to whom this protocol applies.

2 Issues which should always be reported to a Service Director (Notification Category):

- a) the death of a child where abuse or neglect is known or suspected
- b) the unexpected death or serious injury of a child in the area – either resident or visiting
- c) the death or serious injury to a Child in Care (including those who are looked after and are placed in Herefordshire by another authority) – this should include any child in care who is expected to die within 6 –12 months
- d) death or serious injury to a child who is the subject of a child protection plan
- e) when a Child in Care (including a child in care who is living in Herefordshire and who is placed here by another local authority), a child who is the subject of a child protection plan, or a child in need is missing¹ for a period longer than 72 hours. This applies both to a child who goes missing alone and a child who goes missing with their family, e.g. child removed from the country against the terms of the child protection plan. This also includes children in care or who are the subject of a child protection plan who are missing from education.

¹ Based on the statutory guidance on [Children who run away or go missing from home or care](https://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/pkpls/regional-safeguarding-guidance/children-missing-from-care-home-and-education) (2014), the definitions which should be used when working with children, young people and their families are set out in the West Midlands regional safeguarding guidance <https://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/pkpls/regional-safeguarding-guidance/children-missing-from-care-home-and-education>

- f) a child who is in our care or who is the subject of a child protection plan or a young person who is a care experienced person who is homeless or known to be at risk of homelessness
- g) all incidents where refusal of entry to premises is made concerning a child who is the subject of a child protection plan.
- h) Children in Care removed from the UK jurisdiction when that removal is not planned and agreed
- i) incidents where there is a reasonable suspicion of organised 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 network abuse through the internet)
- j) when a child known to the department has been alleged to have committed, or has been charged with a serious offence(s)
- k) when information about a child or young person has raised significant public safety concerns
- l) when there is evidence of serious breakdown in a school or education setting regarding the leadership of the school/setting or the protection of children
- m) when a residential care home or care placement, or residential or independent school has been judged inadequate and Herefordshire has child(ren) placed there (the children's placement team should also be notified if the Need to Know is not coming from that team)
- n) incidents of violence or threats against staff death or serious injury to staff or service user through an accident or incident at work
- o) allegations of gross misconduct against staff
- p) all incidents referred to the local authority designated officer (LADO) where allegations of abuse against staff/carers are made and/or substantiated
- q) where there is an allegation about harm to a child or children concerning an Elected Member, Member of Parliament, or any elected official
- r) incident arising where there is likely to be media interest
- s) incidents where there are serious concerns about practice within the department that have not been resolved quickly or appropriately by managers
- t) incidents where there is potential for significant community concerns (**For YOS use only**) e.g.
 - Death of a young person subject to YOS supervision;
 - A young person subject to YOS supervision becoming a victim of rape (where a formal allegation is made to the police);
 - Attempted suicide of a young person subject to YOS supervision;

- Young person subject to YOS supervision charged with Murder/Manslaughter
 - Young person subject to YOS supervision is charged with Rape
 - A MAPPA serious further offence when the young person is subject to YOS supervision and is already subject to MAPPA
- u) other (professional discretion where other categories are not relevant but there is sufficient concern to escalate)

3. Procedure

All incidents falling into the category for escalation will require an immediate notification to the Service Director on the **same working day**. This would usually be completed by the social worker and/or Team Manager.

The most up-to-date version of the Need to Know (Serious Incident Notification) form will be found in our [online policies and procedures site](#) (under Practice Guidance / All children).

The notification should include the following:

- a) Basic information relating to the child, including the legal status
- b) What is the nature of the concern? Why does the Service Director need to be informed?
- c) Action being taken to deal with the issue
- d) Date when an update is expected
- e) Who to contact for further details

Once completed, the form should be sent to NTK@herefordshire.gov.uk. Please note that if the notification relates to a child missing from care / subject to a CP plan / highly vulnerable, missing for more than 72 hours, please copy in missingchildren@herefordshire.gov.uk

There will be occasions where brief information is acceptable, e.g. where the speed of the notification is critical, e.g. there are extenuating circumstances such as the age of a child, or a child has learning disabilities.

The Service Director can request further information if required.

4. When to escalate to the Corporate Director

If the Service Director is not available, business support colleagues will forward the Serious Incident Notification form to the Corporate Director.

In all other instances, the Service Director will decide when an incident needs to be escalated to the Corporate Director for information or decision. The Service Director / Corporate Director will review the circumstances of each incident and will form a judgement as to the need to escalate further.

The Service Director / Corporate Director will make the decision and take all action concerned with onward transmission of the notification to those named in this protocol. The Communications Team will also be alerted in ALL such circumstances.

The Service Director and Corporate Director will always prioritise discussion of incidents that have been escalated on the same working day. Personal Assistants should therefore be made aware of the alert in order that they can inform the Service Director or Corporate Director.

Link: [Serious Incident Notification](#)

Acknowledgement: *London Borough of Bexley, on whose Policy this is based.*

Appendix A: Serious Incident Notification Categories

NB Please insert the letter and brief description in blue into the [Serious Notification Form](#)

<p>a) Suspicious child death</p>	<p>b) Unexpected or accidental serious child injury or death</p>	<p>c) Serious injury or death of a Looked After Child or Care Leaver</p>
<p>Child Death of a child where abuse or neglect is known or suspected</p>	<p>Unexpected death or serious injury of a child in the area (resident or visiting)</p>	<p>the death or serious injury to a Looked After Child (including those who are looked after and are placed in Herefordshire by another authority) or care leaver – this should include any looked after child who is expected to die within 6 –12 months</p>
<p>d) Serious injury or death of a child under CPP</p>	<p>e) Missing Child who is looked after or subject of CPP/CIN</p>	<p>f) Child who is looked after or subject of CPP, or a care leaver who is homeless or at risk</p>
<p>death or serious injury to a child who is the subject of a CPP</p>	<p>When a Looked After Child (including a looked after child who is living in Herefordshire and who is placed here by another local authority), a child who is the subject of a CPP or a CIN is missing or absent. This applies both to a child who goes missing alone and a child who goes missing with their family, e.g. child removed from the country against the terms of the child protection plan. Includes LAC or CPP who are missing from education.</p>	<p>a child who is looked after or who is the subject of a child protection plan or a young person who is a care leaver who is homeless or known to be at risk of homelessness</p>
<p>g) Refusal of entry to see a child who is subject to CPP</p>	<p>h) Looked after child removed from UK without planning or agreement</p>	<p>i) Suspicion of organised abuse or exploitation</p>
<p>All incidents where refusal of entry to premises is made concerning a child who is the subject of a CPP</p>	<p>Looked After Child removed from the UK jurisdiction when that removal is not planned and agreed</p>	<p>Cases where there is a reasonable suspicion of organised 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 network abuse through the internet)</p>

j) Child alleged to have committed serious offences	k) Child raising public safety concerns	l) Serious breakdown of school/educational setting leadership or protection of children
children cases where a child known to the department has been alleged to have committed, or has been charged with a serious offence(s)	Cases where information about a child or young person has raised significant public safety concerns	When there is evidence of serious breakdown in a school or education setting regarding the leadership of the school/setting or the protection of children
m) Residential Homes or independent school judged inadequate where a child is placed	n) Violence or threats to staff or service user	o) Allegations of gross misconduct
When a residential care home or care placement, or residential or independent school has been judged inadequate and Herefordshire has child(ren) placed there	Incidents of violence or threats against staff, death or serious injury to staff or service user through accident or incident at work	Allegations of gross misconduct against staff
p) Referrals to LADO for allegations of abuse against staff/carers	q) Allegation of harm concerning a Member or elected official	r) Media interest
All cases that are referred to the local authority designated officer (LADO) where allegations of abuse against staff/carers are made and/or substantiated	All cases where there is an allegation about harm to a child or children concerning an Elected Member, Member of Parliament, or any elected official	Cases where there is likely to be media interest
s) Management not resolving serious concerns about a case quickly enough	t) Incidents where there is potential for significant community concern(s) (For YOS use only)	u) Other (professional discretion where other categories are not relevant but there is sufficient concern to escalate)
All cases where there are serious concerns about practice within the department that have not been resolved quickly or appropriately by managers	Cases of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death of a young person subject to YOS supervision; • A young person subject to YOS supervision becoming a victim of rape (where a formal allegation is made to the police); • Attempted suicide of a young person subject to YOS supervision; • Young person subject to YOS supervision charged with Murder /Manslaughter • Young person subject to YOS supervision is charged with Rape • A MAPPA serious further offence when the young person is subject to YOS supervision and is already subject to MAPPA 	

Appendix B : Flowchart