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Approver: Tom Stevenson

And



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Family Resilience and Corporate Parenting -

Cause for Concern (CfC) and Serious Incident Notification Procedure (SIN)

# Cause for Concern Notification

This guidance advises managers in Children’s Services on when and how to brief Assistant Directors and provides a template for reporting significant incidents by raising a Cause for Concern notification.

Assistant Directors need to be alerted to significant incidents and they will make a decision after reading the briefing and record if an audit is required.

Whilst individual managers should use judgement when raising a Cause for Concern, the following list provides examples:-

Children

* Child deaths, or child that has suffered a life-threatening injury, or one that is likely to lead to permanent impairment
* Missing children: Missing for over 24 hours, where the child is:-
  + Looked After,
  + a Care Leaver,
  + an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC),
  + subject to a Child Protection Plan,
  + or otherwise vulnerable
* Serious illness of a child currently supported in any way by Children’s Services
* Any case that is likely to lead to press interest and publicity
* Any serious incident that could potentially meet the threshold for an Ofsted Notification
* Proceedings likely to attract public/or media interest. This will include criminal trials resulting from child protection proceedings
* Parental death where the child is supported in any way by Children’s Services and there are suspicious circumstances surrounding the death e.g. domestic abuse
* Any child who is an expectant parent where following the completion of a Child and Family Assessment there is an identified risk of significant harm to the unborn child or expectant parent.
* Any child with 5 missing episodes within 90 days.

Staff

* Unexpected death or serious injury to a member of staff
* Any serious allegation of abuse against a foster carer or member of staff including historical allegations of which the Council was previously unaware;
* Significant accidents or injuries at work. (This is in addition to the standard health and safety procedures that should be followed for all accidents)
* Involvement in violent incidents
* Allegations of arrests or convictions for criminal offences including historical allegations of which the Council was previously unaware;
* Any media coverage relating to members of staff where that may impact on the Council resulting in reputational risk

This list is not exhaustive and other categories of incidents may also fall within the definition of a serious incident or Cause for Concern. Managers will need to ensure that consideration is given to other serious incidents and use their judgment in discussion with senior managers as to whether the incident needs to be reported in line with this procedure.

Staff members should raise a Cause for Concern notification **within 24 hours** of becoming aware of the circumstances which give rise to the Cause for Concern.

Where an Ofsted Notification is received this notification must be reviewed within 24 hours of receipt to determine whether the circumstances outlined within the notification also require a Cause for Concern notification to be sent in line with this procedure.

**Emergency Duty Team Action**

Where any of the circumstances above are brought to the attention of the Emergency Duty Team (EDT), they will immediately inform the Assistant Director who is on call. The social work team which is responsible for the case will then prepare and send to their Assistant Director an initial briefing within 24 hours (as outlined immediately below).

# Initial Briefing

In the circumstances described above, the first line manager responsible for the case is responsible for drafting a briefing report in the form of a Cause for Concern Notification (see Appendix 1).

The purpose of the briefing is to alert their Assistant Director, Family Resilience and Corporate Parenting of the situation and to provide the information needed to form an initial opinion on what, if any, action is required on behalf of the service. The briefing should include the following information:

* Name of the adult/child subject of the notification
* Details of the incident or issue
* Background to the Authority’s involvement i.e. period of time, reason for involvement, names of staff involved
* Details of child’s legal status if they are Looked After, and registration category if they have a Child Protection Plan, ethnicity and religion etc.
* Current situation including risk analysis and recommendation for action - Next steps

The briefing should be emailed by the Service Manager to the Assistant Director, for either Corporate Parenting or Family Resilience dependent on the child’s status (Child In Need, Child Protection, Looked After Child), and relevant line managers responsible for the child or the matter. As a situation develops, it may be necessary to provide regular updates.  The Cause for Concern report form is appended at Appendix One of this Procedure.

# When a situation has been resolved, (e.g. a missing child has returned), the Assistant Director, Family Resilience must be briefed, with any learning points identified which can be picked up within the wider organisation.

# Ofsted Serious Incident Notification

**The decision whether to notify Ofsted of a Serious Incident must be made by the Director for Quality and Performance**, on behalf of the County Council. Only the Director for Quality and Performance (or someone acting on their direct instruction) can send Ofsted a Serious Incident Notification.

A local authority must notify Ofsted of a serious childcare incident where:

* A child has died (including suspected suicide), and where abuse or neglect is known or suspected
* A child has been “seriously harmed” and abuse or neglect is known or suspected
* A looked after child has died (including cases where abuse or neglect is not known or suspected)
* A child in a regulated setting or service has died (including cases where abuse or neglect is not known or suspected)

“Seriously harmed” in the context of the above includes, but is not limited to, cases where the child has sustained, as a result of abuse or neglect, any or all of the following:

* + A potentially life-threatening injury;
  + Serious and/or likely long-term impairment of physical or mental health or physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development

Where the criteria is met for **Ofsted Serious Incident Notification**, and/or where the child dies and is on a Child Protection Plan, the Director of Quality and Performance will determine if an internal audit of practice should be undertaken. The aim of the audit is to identify early learning points, including consideration as to whether there is worry in relation to inter-agency working to safeguard the child.

The Director of Quality and Performance will take responsibility for determining if the criteria is met and ensuring that the Serious Incident Notification is submitted within five working days of becoming aware that the incident occurred and was deemed to meet the criteria. They will also notify the Partnership Development Manager of the Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership. Where a child has died, the Child Death Overview Panel must also be notified.

The Serious Incident Notification form is appended at Appendix Two of this Procedure.

**A Notification to the National Child Safeguarding Review Panel**

Once a decision has been made that a referral to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel is necessary there is a duty on the local authority to notify the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. This duty is outlined below:

**Duty on local authorities to notify incidents to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel 16C(1) of the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017) states:**

*Where a local authority in England knows or suspects that a child has been abused or neglected, the local authority must notify the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel if –*

*(a) The child dies or is seriously harmed in the local authority’s area, or*

*(b) While normally resident in the local authority’s area, the child dies or is seriously harmed outside England.*

*330. The local authority should notify the panel of any incident that meets the above criteria via the Child Safeguarding Online Notification System. It should do so within five working days of becoming aware it has occurred. Though the responsibility to notify rests on the local authority, it is for all three safeguarding partners to agree which incidents should be notified in their local area. Where there is disagreement, the safeguarding partners should follow local dispute resolution processes.*

*331. The local authority must notify the Secretary of State for Education, and Ofsted of the death of a looked after child.* [This notification is made via the Child Safeguarding Online Notification System]

*332. The local authority should also notify the Secretary of State for Education and Ofsted of the death of a care leaver up to and including the age of 24[[1]](#footnote-1). This should be notified via the Child Safeguarding Online Notification System. The death of a care leaver does not require a rapid review or local child safeguarding practice review. However, safeguarding partners must consider whether the criteria for a serious incident has been met and respond accordingly, in the event the deceased care leaver was under the age of 18. If local partners think that learning can be gained from the death of a looked after child or care leaver in circumstances where those criteria do not apply, they may wish to undertake a local child safeguarding practice review.*

*333. The local authority, on behalf of the safeguarding partners, has a duty to notify the panel about all serious incidents that meet the criteria. The number of serious incidents notified is not a reflection of local area performance. Making a notification, will ensure that learning is identified and fed back into the system to prevent future harm or death. The link to the Child Safeguarding Online Notification form for local authorities to notify incidents to the panel is available on the* [*Report a serious child safeguarding incident page*](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-a-serious-child-safeguarding-incident) *on GOV.UK.*

- (Working Together 2023)

**Please note only the Director of Quality and Performance can notify the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel on behalf of the local authority.**

**SSCP Child Safeguarding Practice Review Referral**

Any organisation with statutory or official duties in relation to children (including the Child Death overview Panel [CDOP] and all members of the partnership) should inform the Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership of any incident which they think should be considered for a child safeguarding practice review using the Cause for Concern form below.

All referrals will initiate an immediate short conversation between the statutory partners (local authority, health and police) to assess the referral and decide whether to complete a SIN which could initiate a rapid review. The purpose of the Rapid Review is to decide whether or not to proceed to an LCSPR or undertake learning via another process.

**Rapid Reviews**

Where a local authority makes a formal notification to the National Panel or Ofsted, it must always share this with the relevant local Safeguarding Partners and this will be considered as a referral that initiates the **Rapid Review** process. All correspondence should be sent to [partnership.team@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:partnership.team@surreycc.gov.uk)

If it is decided to proceed with a Rapid Review the following process will be initiated. The SSCP team will then request Initial scoping and Information Sharing documents from relevant agencies are completed and returned to the [Partnership inbox](mailto:partnership.team@surreycc.gov.uk) within 5 days. A Rapid review meeting will be held to:

* Gather facts

• Identify immediate learning or action

• Determine whether a LCSPR is appropriate

And within 15 days a Rapid Review Outcome Report will be sent to the National Panel recommending an LCSPR if appropriate.

Updated guidance around Surrey Safeguarding Practice Reviews can be found here - [RR-and-LCSPR-Overview-Process-FLOWCHART.pdf (surreyscp.org.uk)](https://www.surreyscp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/RR-and-LCSPR-Overview-Process-FLOWCHART.pdf)

**APPENDIX ONE**

***Please see Cause for Concern Procedure. Once filled in, send it to your Service Manager. Your Service Manager will send it to the relevant Assistant Director.***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **CAUSE FOR CONCERN NOTIFICATION FORM** | | | |
| **GENERAL DETAILS** | | | |
| Child/young person’s name/alias/known as | |  | |
| Age/Date of Birth |  | Legal status |  |
| Gender |  | Ethnicity |  |
| LCS/EHM number |  |  | |
| Local authority currently living in | |  | |
| Name and role of worker | |  | |
| Name and Role of Line manager | |  | |
| Agency and contact details | |  | |
| Details of friend/associates | |  | |
| Date of Completion | |  | |
| Details of Incident | | | |
| Background to the Authority’s involvement *(period of time, reason for involvement, names of staff involved)* | | | |
| Current situation including risk analysis and recommendation for action | | | |
| Next Steps *(what is being done to find the child who are the accountable Agencies/practitioners)* | | | |
| Current/Future Plan *(is there a current CP/CiN or LAC Plan, does it include actions on missing or exploitation risk)* | | | |

**APPENDIX TWO**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **SERIOUS INCIDENT NOTIFICATION FORM** | |
| **Your Details** | |
| **Full name** | Patricia Denney |
| **Telephone** | 0787095907 |
| **Email** | [Patricia.denney@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:Patricia.denney@surreycc.gov.uk) |
| **Role** | Director of Quality and Performance |
| **Notifying Local Authority** | Surrey |
| **Reason for Notification** | |
| **Reason for Notification** | Death:   * Abuse * Neglect * Looked after child - Abuse or neglect known or suspected * Looked after child – No abuse or neglect known or suspected   Serious harm:   * Abuse - Child NAI * Neglect   Other |
| **About the Incident** | |
| **Local authority where incident took place** |  |
| **Responsible Local Authority** |  |
| **When was the incident?** |  |
| **How many children were seriously injured or died?** |  |
| **Characteristics of the Incident** | |
| **What are the characteristics of the incident?**   * Highlight all that apply – suspected or actual | * Abuse * Asylum seeking * Bullying * Child perpetrator * Co-sleeping * Criminal exploitation * Domestic abuse * Elective home education * Extremism * Fabricated illness * Filicide – parent killing their child * Gang violence * Harmful sexual behaviour * Injury * Knife crime * Life-limiting illness (natural causes) * Mental health * Neglect * Non-accidental injury * Parent ex-care leaver * Parent still in care * Parental mental health * Parental substance/drug misuse * Physical abuse * Risk-taking behaviour by child * Road traffic accident * Self-harm * Serious illness * Sexual exploitation * Shaken baby syndrome * Sudden infant death syndrome * Suicide * Other   Or   * Not yet known * Other |
| **Incident Outline** | |
| **What happened?**  Include details of:   * When and where the incident took place * The event leading up to the incident * The names of people involved, including any staff members * Why the incident happened * Any other details you think are important |  |
| **What actions have you taken?**  Include details of what is being done to safeguard any child at risk from the alleged perpetrator. |  |
| **Details of Children** | |
| **Full name(s)** |  |
| **Child(rens) DOB** |  |
| **Child(rens) Date of Death (if applicable)** |  |
| **Does this child(ren) have a disability?** | Yes  No  Unknown |
| **What was the legal status of the child(ren) at the time of the incident?**   * Please highlight one option per child. * If there are multiple children, please highlight in different colours | * None * Adoption * Care order * Emergency protection order * Interim care order * Placement order * Police protection * Section 20 accommodation * Special guardianship order * Supervision order * Ward of court * Unaccompanied asylum-seeking child * On a Child in Need Plan * Other   If other, please provide details: |
| **Ethnicity**   * Please highlight one option per child. * If there are multiple children, please highlight in different colours | * White – British * White – Irish * Any other White background * Mixed – Asian & White * Mixed – Black African & White * Mixed – Black Caribbean & White * Any other mixed background * Asian or Asian British – Indian * Asian or Asian British – Pakistani * Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi * Asian or Asian British – Chinese * Any other Asian background * Black or Black British – Caribbean * Black or Black British – African * Any other Black background * Any other ethnic group * Not declared |
| **Gender**   * Please highlight one per child * If there are multiple children, please highlight in different colours | * Male * Female * Transgender * Not known |
| **Child Protection Plan Details** | |
| **Was the child on a child protection plan at the time of the incident?** | * Yes * No * Unknown |
| **If yes to the above question:** | |
| **Date of the start of the protection plan:** |  |
| **Date of the end of the protection plan:** |  |
| **Please select all categories of child protection plan that apply:** | * Emotional abuse * Neglect * Physical abuse * Child sexual abuse |
| **If no to the above question:** | |
| **Was the child on a child protection plan at any time prior to the incident?**   * If yes please fill in the above with the start and end dates of the plan and any categories that apply. | * Yes * No * Unknown |
| **Pre-birth Plan Details** | |
| **Was the child on a pre-birth plan at the time of the incident?** | Yes  No  Unknown |
| **Has the child previously been on pre-birth plan?** | Yes  No  Unknown |
| **Child in Need Details** | |
| **Was the child on a children in need plan at the time of the incident?**  **-** If yes, Plan Start date  - If yes, Plan End date | Yes  No  Unknown |
| **Has the child previously been on a child in need plan?**   * If yes, Plan Start date * If yes, Plan End date | Yes  No  Unknown |
| **Placement Details** |  |
| **Where was/were the child(ren) staying at the time of the incident?** | * Foster care – short term * Foster care – long term * Home * Hospital * Lodgings * Mother and baby unit * Relatives * Residential children’s home * Residential children’s home – short break * Residential family unit * Residential school * Semi-independent unit * Young Offenders Institute * Other * Not yet known   If ‘other’ please specify: |
| **Name of placement**  **Building and street**  **Town or city**  **County**  **Postcode** |  |
| **Education and Early Years Provision Details** | |
| **What education or early years provision was the child attending at the time of the incident?** | * Childminder * Nursery * Other early years * College * School * Home schooled * No school * Unknown |
| **Name of the establishment**  **Building and street**  **Town or city**  **County**  **Postcode** |  |
| **Agency Details** | |
| **Was the child known to social care or any other agencies prior to the incident?** | Yes/No   * Children Social Care * Police * Health * Other |
| **If yes to the above question:** | |
| **Please give details of which agency they were known to and how they were known?**   * For example, children’s social care from Jan 2017 to present |  |
| **Parent or Guardian Details**  **Please provide the name(s) of the parent(s)/guardian(s) who had the main parental responsibility for the child at the time of incident.** | |
| Full Name(s) |  |
| **Relationship to the child:**   * Please provide details of all who apply | * Mother * Father * Stepmother * Stepfather * Adoptive mother * Adoptive father * Grandmother * Grandfather * Aunt * Uncle * Other female * Other male |
| **Specific Questions** | |
| **Neglect**  **Is there is evidence of neglect? Y/N**  **If so, is this neglect recent or long-standing? Recent / Long-standing** | |
| **Disability**  **Does this child have a disability? Yes No Unknown** | |
| **Is this child a looked after child? Y / N** | |
| **Is this an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child? Y / N** | |
| **Other information** | |
| **Please provide any other relevant information (e.g. where relevant include the level of involvement with Health agencies e.g. being registered with a GP is very different to numerous visits to A&E)** |  |

1. *Care leavers are entitled to support from their Personal Adviser up to their 25th birthday. Local authorities are required to keep in touch with all care leavers up the point they reach age 21, and to make their best efforts to contact all care leavers aged 21 to 24 annually to remind them that they remain eligible for support. If a young person chooses not to take up support between 21 to 24 years of age the local authority may no longer be aware of a care leaver’s whereabouts or circumstances (and therefore their death).* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)