

To: All CSC Staff

**Gail Hancock**  
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Please ask for: Gail Hancock

Phone: 01452 425775

Our Ref: GH/dh

Your Ref:

Date: 18 August 2020

Dear Colleagues

**Re: All Staff Communication Regarding Personal Safety**

I hope you are keeping safe and well.

With regret, there have been a number of incidents over the past few weeks which have heightened concerns for staff safety, particularly in relation to social work staff. A member of our social work staff from Gloucester Locality has recently been assaulted, we believe by a service user's sister and friend, another social worker from the Fostering Service has received personal threats to harm from a child in care's father and there has also been a number of derogatory boards posted up around the county outside a number of the council's social work offices and we believe these, and related incidents concerning vandalism to a social worker's car and the smearing of faeces on an office door, may be related to parents known to Cotswold Locality whose children are currently subject to court care proceedings. The derogatory posters can be identified by the '@justice forchil5' Twitter account which is usually included in the details on the boards. I can confirm that all these matters have been reported to the Police.

Whilst these sorts of incidents are thankfully not common they are a reminder that personal safety must remain a priority for all staff at all times. This is why I am writing to alert you to the relevant information and ask you to continue to address personal safety issues with your line manager and colleagues as an integral part of your supervision, team meetings and whilst preparing to undertake your role in the community.

I would like to acknowledge that actual, threatened and perceived threats of violence, aggression and harm directed towards our staff, their property or council offices is unacceptable. I would like to confirm that Chris Spencer, Director of Children's Services, and I take a zero-tolerance approach to this type of behaviour as does Gloucestershire County Council (GCC). Chris has liaised with Pete Bungard, Chief Executive, who is aware and Mandy Quayle, Director of People. We are all committed to supporting our staff to stay safe and will continue to work with the Police and cooperate with their on-going enquiries, as necessary and appropriate. I meet with the Police on a weekly basis and last week I was sent the following Police crime prevention link covering various aspect of safety which staff may find helpful:

<https://www.gloucestershire.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/>

I am aware that this subject can be worrying and anxiety provoking, not only for the staff directly affected, but for colleagues and other staff within the department and wider council system. Whilst individuals affected by these issues have received, and will continue to be offered, support from their line managers I would like to remind all staff that the Employee Assistance Programme and our Occupational Health Service are well placed to provide additional support and intervention if this is required. Contact details for the Employee Assistance Programme are outlined below but please don't hesitate to speak with your line manager as well.

The Health Assured Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a free service for staff providing a range of information and support, including:

- 24-hour confidential telephone counselling and support
- Access to information and advice specialists
- On-line health information

You can contact the EAP by:

- Telephoning 0800 030 5182 (free 24-hour helpline);
- Going to Health Assured EAP (username: Gloucester and password: Council); or
- Using the new Health Assured 'Health E-Hub' App which provides a great number of the online services when and where you need them.
- You can also download the App from the Apple App store and the Google Play store by searching 'Health E-Hub'.
- For more information about the EAP go to:  
<https://staffnet.gloucestershire.gov.uk/internalservices/occupational-health/employee-assistance-programmeep-staff-counselling-and-advice/>

I am aware that several staff have been dealing with young people in considerable distress in the local community recently and these experiences can have quite a profound impact. In raising the issue of personal safety, I would like to confirm that I am also referring to emotional health and well-being as well as physical safety. I recognise how important this is and, as a social worker myself, I am very aware of the evidence around higher than average burn out rates within the social work profession whereby social workers are at risk of suffering from compassion fatigue, stress and anxiety. With this in mind Occupational Health is available for any staff who may need this service. Please speak with your line manager if you think this may be of benefit to you.

For ease of reference, I am also attaching the link below which refers to the lone working policy in case you would like a quick refresh:

<https://staffnet.gloucestershire.gov.uk/employee-information-and-support/staff-health-well-being-and-safety/safety-health-and-environment-she/she-advice-and-guidance-for-gcc-staff/lone-working-personal-safety/>

I am aware that the majority of staff continue to work remotely and virtually at the moment unless, with the full knowledge and agreement of their line manager, staff are coming into the office, attending court (including the Virtual Court Rooms located in Shire Hall and Cheltenham Locality offices) or undertaking a home visit. At the moment, a number of the issues are particularly relevant for the Cotswold Locality office and the sites of the Virtual Court Rooms in Shire Hall and Cheltenham Locality, but anyone using other offices/council buildings should also be alert.

Whilst the Police investigations are ongoing, please can I remind you all to be extra vigilant when you are entering, leaving and are in the vicinity of any of our council buildings. Please think carefully about your safety, and that of your colleagues, by ensuring that you consider the following:

- Do not allow anyone to 'tailgate' you as you swipe into buildings and do not hold the door open for anyone who may be entering in behind you.
- If you can work from home, which continues to be the GCC's agreed corporate stance, then please do so.
- Be aware that you may be able to work from another office if you need to be on site and this is more convenient.

- Stagger your times into and out of the office if you have to be on site and vary the entrances that you use to enter and exit, if at all possible.
- Plan to enter and leave with a colleague wherever possible.
- Be extra vigilant when parking and returning to your car located in any of the car parks close to the offices.
- Identify a work place 'buddy', or make an agreement with your line manager, to ensure you have an agreed person who is your single point of contact to check in with before and after home visits, particularly when you are undertaking lone visits
- Do not have your GCC lanyard on show when outside of the office and in the vicinity of the offices.
- If you do see any suspicious behaviour by anyone in the vicinity of the offices, please report it to your line manager immediately, or to the Police if you feel in anyway threatened or intimidated.
- Report any new sightings of the derogatory posters to the Police using the following crime number CR/24077/20 which relates to incident GC-20200720
- Discuss any emotional or psychological concerns you have with your line manager and remember that the Employee Assistance Programme and Occupational Health Service are available to you.

I will endeavour to keep you updated about any further developments in relation to this matter. If you would like to discuss any of the contents in this email, please do speak to your line manager in the first instance or any member of the Leadership Team if further clarification or additional information is required.

Fortunately, matters of this sort are relatively infrequent but given what has happened in a relatively short space of time I hope this letter is a timely reminder about the steps that can be taken to help support you.

I would like to thank you all for your continuing hard work and commitment to deliver services to the most vulnerable children and families in Gloucestershire at this time.

Kind regards



Gail

**Gail Hancock**  
Interim Director (Children's Safeguarding & Care)



Chris

**Chris Spencer**  
Director of Children's Services