

To:

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Our Ref: GH/jp

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Dear Colleagues

Re: Children's Social Care Call Handling - Briefing

I wrote to staff regarding communication with partners on 8 February 2021. I outlined a number of actions for staff to help improve the experience for partners as well as children, young people and families who are attempting to contact children's social care professionals. The overall aim of the call handling developments is to provide a responsive and supportive pathway for partners and families trying to contact with us by telephone.

Tom Underwood, Business Manager, was tasked with reviewing the telephone 'hunt groups' and call handling arrangements within our teams. A 'hunt group' is a number of staff who are set up to take incoming calls. We are now able to provide an update on the progress that has been made to date and to outline the next steps moving forward.

What has been changed?

Focusing on our operational social work teams first, we have grouped our 'phone systems to be Locality focused. This has resulted in the creation of 7 x hunt groups and these all went live at the start of April 2021 as part of a planned change to the phone system.

All practitioners and managers have had a 'call forward' facility placed on their direct dial 'phone number so if they are unavailable when there is an incoming call it will still be answered. If the 'phone isn't picked up after a number of rings it will 'bounce' to the team administrator who can answer the call. If they are also not available the call will then 'bounce' to other administrators in the hunt group until the call is answered. We have set up 'overflows' between groups to ensure all calls can be answered. The 7 x hunt groups are set up as follows:

1. Cheltenham (Assessment, Safeguarding & Permanence)
2. Tewkesbury (Assessment & Safeguarding)
3. Forest of Dean (Assessment & Safeguarding)
4. Cotswolds (Assessment & Safeguarding)
5. Stroud (Assessment, Safeguarding & Permanence)
6. Gloucester (Permanence U11 & 11+)
7. Gloucester (Assessment & Safeguarding)

These arrangements will ensure that all 'phones are answered, they don't hit 'dead ends' and will be passed onto the most suitable person in an orderly manner. Hopefully, this will provide a better customer service. These changes will help to ensure a consistent customer service standard whereby all incoming

'phone calls will be answered in an efficient and effective way by ensuring someone is able to take the call and respond to the caller.

What do you need to do?

To ensure these changes are as effective as possible there are a number of things we need all staff to do and these are outlined below:

- a) Log into your Jabber when you are available and answer your own calls
- b) Do not forward your Jabber to a mobile as this overrides the 'call forward' facility
- c) Ensure your signature includes your own direct dial number
- d) When working with partners and families give them your direct dial phone number, this will always be forwarded to the administrators if you are not available to answer a call, so please do not give out 'team numbers'
- e) If you are on 'Duty' please ensure you are accessible and contactable in case a call need to be passed to you from the administrators.
- f) Support the administrators with any challenging calls and please do not decline calls where a response needs to be provided.

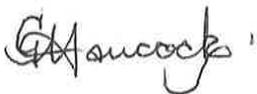
What else is changing?

The changes outlined above are only the first step of our improvements to call handling arrangements in Children's Social Care Services. Over the coming weeks we will continue to communicate additional information as further changes are made. In anticipation, the future changes will include the following:

- g) Reviewing Hunt Groups and phone arrangements for other teams/services
- h) Publishing our customer service standards for call handling
- i) Developing and delivering training to business support staff in line with the customer service standards
- j) Connecting our phone lines and entry points with the Children's Helpline to ensure coordinated management of calls
- k) Establishing a consistent message to callers trying to reach us 'out of hours'

Thank you for your support with these arrangements.

Kind Regards



Gail Hancock
Interim Director for Children's Safeguarding and Care