

To:

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Please ask for: Gail Hancock

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Our Ref: Gh/jp

Date: 20th September 2021

Dear All

Re: Staff safety and wellbeing:

I am re-circulating the attached all staff communication as a timely reminder of the importance of staff safety and well-being.

As we are all aware, social work is a demanding profession which provides a unique opportunity to come alongside children, young people and their families at some very challenging and distressing points in their lives. As well as being uniquely rewarding our roles will encounter situations where emotions run high and it's important that we know how to anticipate and handle these situations well. A short while ago these tensions were sadly evidenced in the well-publicised assault on a social worker in Haringey, London. Whilst relatively uncommon these types of incidents provide a reminder about the importance of safety and wellbeing. Our recent and continuing experiences of the COVID 19 pandemic have highlighted the increasing pressures on children, young people and families and the consequent additional challenges facing staff who are undertaking home visits and having direct contact with them.

Rob Tyrrell, our Principal Social Worker, is leading on a piece of development work at the moment to address the service's approach to *de-escalation*. With our increasing focus on relational practice and the importance of staff wellbeing and safety, this is an opportunity to build on and improve existing guidance to create more openness and dialogue about our responses to anxiety, hostility, fear and anger when working closely with families. Rob has been searching for models of best practice locally and nationally and is looking for input to critique these examples. If you would like to contribute please get in touch with Rob directly via Robert.TYRRELL@gloucestershire.gov.uk. It would be also useful to hear more about your personal experiences and responses to difficult situations so we can identify the learning from this, and further inform our shared approach.

Whilst we develop this, please continue to follow our existing guidance - the key message is that every visit should be assessed to try to determine if there are particular risks and, if there is any concern, appropriate arrangements should be put in place. Simple steps should be agreed in every team and are certainly just as necessary when we are working from home as we may have less direct contact with team colleagues. So, please remember to:

- Ensure someone knows where you are at all times.
- Keep shared Outlook calendars up to date.
- Check in and out with your colleagues / manager between visits and at the start and end of the day.
- Ensure that you have a mobile phone that is charged and has a good signal where you are visiting.
- If the visit is assessed as high risk, do not go alone or make arrangements to have the meeting in a safer place.

- Position yourself with your back to the door to make sure you have a clear pathway to exit quickly, if necessary.
- Do not provoke or antagonise a difficult situation.
- If you feel threatened in any way make an excuse to leave immediately to avoid any conflict.
- Update your Manager and Advanced Practitioner about any incident or situation that felt threatening or where anyone's safety was placed at risk.

There are other good practice tips in the SHE guidance available on Staffnet which focuses on personal safety and managing the threat of violence.

Any incidents where staff are the victim of violence, aggression, abusive and threatening behaviour should be discussed with line managers and support is available. Incidents should also be reported online at <https://sheasure.net/gloucestershirecc/Portal/Portal/Index> This reporting is important to enable the service and the wider organisation to review identified risks and to learn how responses can be shared effectively so lessons are learnt.

If you have any questions or queries about risk assessing and managing any aspect of your practice, please speak with your supervisor and line managers.

Kind Regards



Gail Hancock
Interim Director for Children's Safeguarding and Care