

Operation Encompass

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Joint Agency Protocol for Domestic Abuse - Notifications to Schools, Colleges and Early Years settings



Created: March 2019

Reviewed: September 2021



1. Introduction

Operation Encompass is a national Police and Education safeguarding partnership enabling support for children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse. Information is shared by the police with the school the day after officers have attended a domestic abuse incident thus enabling appropriate support to be given, dependent upon the needs and wishes of the child.

Children experiencing domestic abuse are negatively impacted by this exposure; domestic abuse has been identified as an Adverse Childhood Experience and can lead to emotional, physical and psychological harm. Operation Encompass aims to mitigate this harm by enabling immediate support, making a child's day better and giving them a better tomorrow.

Operation Encompass believes that children are victims of domestic abuse in their own right and should be acknowledged as such.

This protocol sets out Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's plans for the multi-agency process for notifying their schools when a child has experienced domestic abuse and violence in their household.

2. Legal Context

Government Definition of Domestic Abuse and Violence:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- *psychological*
- *physical*
- *sexual*
- *financial*
- *emotional*

Controlling behaviour

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

1 in 5 children have been exposed to domestic abuse and it is present in 60% of all serious case reviews. It is estimated that children are present in 80% of incidents.

Information Sharing

Section 11(2) of the Children's Act, 2004 requires Local Authorities and the Police to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

All authorities must operate in compliance with the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018/General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The relevant sections in respect of this Joint Protocol are:

Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA)/General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	<p>Under Article 6 of the GDPR – <u>Processing Personal Data</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (e) Processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller. <p>Under Article 9 of the GDPR – <u>Processing Special Categories of Personal Data</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (g) Processing is necessary for reasons of substantial public interest. <p>Under Schedule 1 of the DPA – special categories of personal data and criminal convictions etc. data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Part 2, Section 18 – safeguarding of children and of individuals at risk
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Personal data shared must be proportionate, necessary but not excessive, and must be balanced with the consideration of privacy rights under the Human Rights Act. It must take into account any duty of confidentiality owed. A public interest in disclosure must outweigh an individual's right to privacy.

3. Aims (See Appendix 1 for process)

The aim for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is to notify schools of any domestic abuse/violence incidents reported to the police involving children on their roll by 9am the following working/school day or as soon as possible thereafter. It is a multi-agency operation between Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Cambridgeshire County Council, Peterborough City Council and the schools and colleges in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The police will share details of all domestic abuse incidents (crime/non-crime, and Standard, Medium and High risk) where a child is present with the Local Authority's Education Safeguarding Team. This information will then be shared via secure email with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Domestic Abuse Lead (DA Lead). The school will then decide on the most appropriate support for that child during what could potentially be a difficult day for them.

For Early Years settings in Cambridgeshire, the information will be shared with the DSL by telephone where we are aware which setting the child attends.

The police will routinely share incidents that are rated as medium/high risk with Children's Social Care. If schools have additional concerns about the child/children, they should refer to the Effective Support for Children and Families in Peterborough and Cambridgeshire (Threshold document) and consider whether services are required under Early Help to support

the child and their family. If indications are that the child is at significant or immediate risk of harm then an automatic immediate referral to Children's Social Care should be made.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Cambridgeshire Constabulary and Cambridgeshire Education Safeguarding Team Responsibility:

Cambridgeshire Constabulary, via the Police Domestic Abuse (DA) desk within the MASH, will provide the Education Safeguarding Team with a daily spreadsheet of domestic incidents where a child was present. The Education Safeguarding Team will then search available systems to establish the education provider for the child and then send an email notification to the relevant school safeguarding contact as near to 9am as possible. NB. For early years settings in Cambridgeshire, the notification will be made by telephone.

Incidents which occur on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday will be reported to schools and colleges by 9am or as soon as possible thereafter. Incidents which occur on Friday, Saturday and Sunday will be reported by 9am or as soon as possible thereafter on a Monday or the following working day.

The following information will be shared:

- The fact that the police were called out in the last 24 hours or the next working day if it occurs on a Friday/Saturday/Sunday to a domestic abuse incident where a child was present, witnesses or was involved;
- The time and date of the event;
- Brief circumstances surrounding the event;
- The names and dates of birth of any child from that school or college who were present, witnessed or were involved when the incident occurred;
- The relationship of the parties involved to the children; and
- Any other relevant safeguarding information that may assist the school or college to provide early intervention support to the child being referred.

The school will record this information on their chronology for the child/ren and store this in the school's child protection recording system in accordance with their safeguarding procedures.

Records of the information shared with the Education Safeguarding Team will be recorded by the Police DA desk for audit and management information purposes. Similarly, the Education Safeguarding Team will retain details of all notifications shared with schools on a corresponding spreadsheet.

School Holidays:

Notifications will continue to be sent during periods when schools are not open; i.e. Half – term and seasonal holiday periods. It is recognised that DSLs or the DA Lead may not be immediately available but it is important that they continue to receive this important information. However, if an incident is assessed as high risk requiring an urgent response, the Education Safeguarding Manager will be informed in order to make immediate contact with the relevant school or setting.

Schools' roles and responsibilities:

Schools must have a trained DSL with responsibility for safeguarding within the school who is part of the Senior Leadership Team. Schools and colleges in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are also provided with additional training from the Education Safeguarding Team to act as the DA Lead in a school or college. All schools and colleges have access to the Education Safeguarding Team's 'Domestic Abuse Guidance for Early Years, Schools and Colleges' and DA Lead training.

In order for the operation to work effectively, it is important that the Education Safeguarding Team holds an up to date list of those DSLs and DA Leads.

The information shared does not duplicate or replace any safeguarding interventions that may occur following police involvement. The purpose is to provide schools with important information, so they are able to better support the child/ren appropriately following what is likely to have been a traumatic experience. By sharing this information, it is hoped that children will receive quick and targeted emotional support at the earliest opportunity as required.

Schools will make sure their DSL or DA Lead is available to receive notifications before 9am or as soon as possible thereafter.

It is recognised that the handling of confidential and sensitive information needs to be dealt with in a way that is proportionate and appropriate to the needs of the child/young person and family. To address this, staff receiving the information must have accessed the DSL and/or DA Lead training.

Consideration will be given to which other members of staff may need this information. Only relevant, proportionate and accurate information will be shared appropriate to each individual case and acting in the best interests of the child/ren.

In summary, schools responsibility is to:

- Ensure there is a DSL or DA Lead within the school or college and that they have attended the appropriate training prior to receiving notifications.
- Ensure the DSL/DA Lead is available to receive any notifications as required.
- Ensure they keep an accurate record of each notification and store it utilising the current process used to record child protection information within the school or college.
- Provide appropriate support to a child, following a notification.
- Consider whether a referral to Early Help or Children's Social Care is needed.

5. Schools external to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Where a report is received regarding a child who resides in Cambridgeshire or Peterborough but attends an out of county school then this information will not be shared as they are not covered by this Protocol.

Addendum – added September 2021

Notification of Missing Children and Young People

Operation Encompass will include notification to Education of missing children and young people.

It is widely understood that missing episodes by children and young people are an indicator of possible harm, both within the family home and increasingly within the community. Missing episodes are heavily linked to exploitation.

The key to effective safeguarding is a multi-agency response. Currently, Social Care are notified of any missing children automatically via the COMPACT system however other key agencies are not. Working on the success of Operation Encompass and the support this allows schools to provide to children and young people who experience domestic abuse within the home, it is recognised that education services could extend this to those who go missing.

Notification to schools will bring about:

- Early information sharing to schools to assist with them supporting the child/young person and their siblings/family during and after the missing episode.
- Currently schools are not notified until the initial strategy discussion which takes place once a child is missing for more than 5 days. Notification via Operation Encompass will identify at an earlier stage any additional vulnerabilities that could affect a risk assessment of the missing episode which Police were previously not aware of i.e. truancy, SEND, previous logs of concern.
- Improved information sharing at strategy meetings as the schools will already be aware of the missing episode.
- This process is not designed for schools to complete return home interviews or proactively gather information about the child's experiences when missing. This is completed by personnel from the MET (Missing, Exploited and Trafficked) Hub. However, it is nationally recognised that increased support and early intervention can reduce vulnerability and repeat episodes. Schools have more contact with children and young people than most other agencies and therefore, it is vital they receive early notification to allow their safeguarding and support processes to work effectively.
- Increased relationships between schools, safeguarding teams and local Neighbourhood Policing through earlier information sharing.
- The possibility of schools being able to provide key information to assist with locating the child such as information about peers, routines etc.
- Improvements to MACE (Missing and Criminally Exploited) meeting as Education will have a greater understanding of those children discussed at the meeting from a missing perspective.

Process:

- Each morning, the Op Encompass notifications will include:
 - o Children and young people who have gone missing within the last 24 hours (or the preceding weekend if notifying on a Monday morning).
 - o Children and young people who have been found within the last 24 hours (or the preceding weekend if notifying on a Monday morning).
 - o The notification will include the following:
 - Initial missing notification: Child's name, date of birth, risk level, date and time child went missing and brief circumstances.
 - Found notification: Child's name, date of birth, risk level, date and time child went missing, date and time child located and brief update from the Welfare and Intelligence Return Interview completed by MET Hub.

- MASH Police will record this on the Op Encompass data spreadsheet and notify Education in the same fashion as Domestic Abuse notifications each morning.
- Education will circulate as per their internal processes.
- Any information which schools feel is relevant to a live missing incident can be referred in via the MASH education navigator to MASH Police.

Appendix 1 – Process map

Notification process for schools and colleges for Domestic Abuse incidents

This process intends to notify schools and colleges before 9am or as soon as possible thereafter where a child has been witness, present or involved in a domestic incident, where police have attended. This process does not replace existing child protection/safeguarding arrangements

