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Services
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Children, Families & Communities
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Ref :TR/SG

4th November 2016

Dear Head teacher,

I hope by now that you have had the opportunity to read my first two communications, the first one being sent on 7th October 2016 which was my introduction letter and my second one sent on 21st October 2016 regarding the interim arrangements for the replacement of Sally Mills, both of which are attached for your information if you have not received them as yet.

I am writing to you today to share some information with you on two further areas of business that I know have been of concern to yourselves. Firstly the information sharing between police, the local authority and schools where there has been a domestic abuse incident in the home of a child and secondly a development on the process for referring case of concern into the Family Front Door.

Management and Information Sharing on incidents of Domestic Abuse.

We have revised our domestic abuse triage processes in order to improve our ability to identify cases within standard, medium and high risk criteria and also to ensure that where cases are discussed at triage, there is a single record of the outcome of that discussion.

Attached for you is our criteria definitions chart. You will see that it identifies the types of cases that will be graded standard, medium and high risk. All standard incidents are recorded for information, Medium and High risk are presented to the daily triage meeting attended by a group of multi-agency professionals including health, probation, police and children's social care. Underneath each category there are some additional protective factors and risks factors that the triage meeting will take into consideration when coming to a final decision on the appropriate grading for the individual incident.

As you are aware, individual schools are not represented at the triage meetings. At this moment in time we manage between 80 and 100 medium and high risk domestic abuse incidents a week in triage and it would not be possible for us to liaise with individual schools on each one of those.

We have identified a dedicated information support office (ISCO) who will ensure that the notifications are shared directly with the schools if we have been able to identify a school that the child attends. The notification will include the detail for the incident, the assessed grade and for high and medium incidents will include information on actions agreed at triage.

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When you receive a notification, I ask that you review this against the information that you hold regarding the child and the family. If you are concerned that the grading given to the incident, in the context of the information you hold, is an inappropriate grading, and you have concerns for the welfare or the immediate safety of a child, please follow the Family Front Door referral procedures and complete the concerns contact form online, if it is an immediate concern for the safety of a child, call the Family Front Door on 01905 822666

If you are in agreement with the outcome of the decision the following processes apply:

Standard Grading : this will be information for you to retain on your records and schools, alongside the police, the local authority and health services will be able to retain this information enabling them to identify any patterns or a developing picture of concern for the child.

Medium / High Grading: If the outcome of the triage is that a social work assessment will be undertaken, or a strategy discussion undertaken, then you will be contacted as the responsible school to contribute to these processes.

Strategy Discussions

We have secured a telephone conferencing facility at all social care offices. If you are required to contribute to a strategy discussion we hope this facility will enable you to contribute more easily. We appreciate your flexibility in contributing to the strategy discussions. There is often relatively short notice of these discussion, and due to the volume and our requirement to undertake these meetings without delay, there is often very little flexibility in the time that the meeting can take place.

This new process will be in effect as of Monday 7th November 2016, and I hope that you experience quickly, an improvement in the information sharing on domestic abuse notifications.

The ISCO role is funded by the local authority and we will review how this works as a dedicated post to support the information sharing between the police, the local authority and education services.

Referrals to the FFD

We have also developed the initial concerns online form that you complete when making referrals. As you are aware the first three questions relate to identifying whether you as the referrer, have immediate concerns for the safety of a child. In order to support us to identify immediate concerns from non-immediate concerns for the welfare of a child, we have added two questions. Question 4 will ask you whether or not you have concerns for the welfare of a child that are not immediate safeguarding issues. Question 5 will ask if you are seeking advice and assistance on how to support a family with early help.

The community social workers role is to offer this advice and assistance to schools. If you have not been able to obtain this support and information from a community social worker, and have resorted to contacting the Family Front Door, please tick yes to Question 5.

We have also put I place an "outcome of referral" letter. This letter seeks to ensure all referrers are informed of the decision and how this has applied the Threshold Levels of Need. The new concerns contact form and referral letter are attached for your information.

I hope that you feel that we have listened to and taken action on the concerns that have been raised by schools. We continue to value the contribution you make to our assessments and our interventions with children.

In my short time here in Worcestershire, I have been able to review some excellent examples of schools supporting us, and I would like to pass on my thanks to you for your continued support.

As identified in my introductory letter I am keen to ensure that we can develop some local connections with me, but also with my Senior Group Managers. If you feel that you have a local network meeting that would be valuable for a manager to attend, please refer to my introductory letter and the contact details within.

Kind regards,



Tina Russell
Assistant Director – Safeguarding Services
Children's Social Care