**‘Need to Know’ Procedure and Practice Guidance**

**Introduction**

The importance of sharing information and decision-making where there are incidents of concern should not be underestimated. It is fundamental for children where there is a significant concern to be reported to senior managers at the earliest opportunity.

This guidance sets out the mandatory reporting requirements for all staff within the Families and Children Directorate. Failure to report incidents may mean that a child or young person, parent, or member of staff is placed at risk of being harmed and may also impact on the reputation of the service and Council. It is the responsibility of managers and practitioners to ensure all incidents of concern involving children are reported to the relevant senior manager.

This policy has been designed to support staff to identify which children meet the criteria for reporting to a senior manager through the ‘Need to Know’ notification process. Sometimes it is a matter of fine judgement whether an issue is sufficiently serious to inform the Director of Families and Children (Director), however there are a few circumstances where the Director should always be informed. If you are in any doubt, always discuss it with your line manager or the senior manager on duty. The Need-to-Know process is not an intervention in itself, it is expected that a coordinated response is already underway to the incident/event at the same time. Your manager will support you with this and seek advice as necessary.

The Director will take the decision as to whether and what needs to be escalated further to the Corporate Director of Children and Education (DCS) or the Chief Executive in the DCS’ absence. The DCS will be responsible for onward transmission to other senior colleagues to whom this protocol applies.

Issues to be reported to the Director and their notification category are set out below. The categories set out below are not exhaustive and must not preclude the reporting of other incidents which are not outlined, which require senior management oversight in order to support with decision making and practice guidance

**Children and Young People**

* Child deaths, or child that has suffered a life-threatening injury, or one that is likely to lead to permanent impairment.
* Significant injury, assault, or hospitalisation of a child
* Where a child known is arrested for a serious offence
* Death or serious injury of a parent with whom we are working
* Vulnerable child who is removed by a parent
* Missing child for over 24 hours, where the child is a child in care, subject to a Child Protection Plan or otherwise vulnerable
* Significant police activity that is planned and children’s social care have been alerted
* Any situation that is likely to lead to press interest and publicity, including those in proceedings and trials
* Significant LADO issue – prominent person, or leader within a school, faith community etc
* Criminal court case, regarding a child protection incident or any situation when the possibility of a judicial review has been raised
* Proceedings/events/inspections likely to attract public/or media interest. This will include criminal trials resulting from child protection proceedings
* Any serious incident that could potentially meet the threshold for an Ofsted Notification (see [Reporting serious incidents in a children’s social care service to Ofsted - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tell-ofsted-about-an-incident-childrens-social-care-notification))

**Staff**

* Unexpected death or serious injury to a member of staff
* Any serious allegation of abuse against a foster carer or member of staff including historical allegations of which the Council was previously unaware (always alert the LADO).
* Significant accidents or injuries at work
* Involvement in violent incidents
* Allegations of arrests or convictions for criminal offences including historical allegations of which the Council was previously unaware
* Significant team issue that represents a risk to staff wellbeing, service continuity or delivery
* Any media coverage relating to members of staff where that may impact on the Council resulting in reputational risk

This list is not exhaustive and other categories of incidents may also fall within the definition of a serious incident or Need to Know. Managers will need to ensure that consideration is given to other serious incidents and use their judgment in discussion with senior managers as to whether the incident needs to be reported in line with this procedure.

**What you need to do – Practice standards**

**Practice standard -** In the circumstances described above, the first line manager responsible will complete a Need-to-Know Notification (see [template](#NTKtemplate) below) on the same day or within 24 hours. The purpose of the briefing is to alert the Director (via the Head of Service) of the situation and to provide the information needed to form an initial opinion on what, if any, action is required on behalf of the service. All the sections of the form must be completed.

**Practice standard -** Should this occur out of hours, the OOH team will prepare a briefing within 24 hours and send (via the Head of Service) to the Director

**Practice standard -** The Team Manager must share the notification with the Service Manager or covering Service Manager for the purpose of quality assurance and to agree the next course of action / any plan required before sharing with the Director (via the Head of Service). However, if sharing with the Service Manager would cause delay, the form should be sent to the Head of Service without delay.

**Practice standard –** Once the Service Manager and Head of Service have reviewed the information and decision is made that a Need to Know to the Director, the Head of Service will need to send this to the Director within 24 hours

**Practice standard –** The Director will share the Need to Know with the DCS who will decide whether others need to be informed, such as the Chief Executive, Press Office, Lead Member etc, and notify them as appropriate.

**Practice standard -** When a situation has been resolved, (e.g., a missing child has returned), the Director must be briefed, with any learning identified which can be considered and followed up at the earliest opportunity.

**Practice standard -** Consideration will be given by the DCS as to whether a serious incident notification is needed.

**Principles**

**Timeliness** - Ensure that all escalations are made promptly to facilitate swift decision-making and intervention.

**Accuracy** - Provide precise and factual information to enable informed assessments by senior leadership.

**Confidentiality** - Handle all information shared during the escalation process with the utmost confidentiality, adhering to data protection policies.

**Professional Judgment -** Apply sound professional judgment to identify incidents that meet the criteria for notification.

**Collaboration** - Work collaboratively with colleagues and other agencies to gather comprehensive information and ensure a coordinated response.

**Accountability -** Take responsibility for initiating the Need-to-Know process and for the accuracy of the information provided.

**Need To Know / Briefing Template,**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name of Team Manager completing this briefing?** |  | **Child’s Name**  |  |
| **Role** |  | **Plan/CP/CLA/CIN** |  |
| **Team** |  |
| **Child’s DOB** |  | **LL J Number**  |  |
| **Child’s Address** |  | **School/ ETE provider (if NEET please state)** |  |
| **Parents/Carers Names** |  |  |  |  |
| **Relationship**  |  |  |  |  |
| **DOBs** |  |  |  |  |
| **Addresses (if different to child)** |  |  |  |  |
| **RMS Number (Police) *(if appropriate)*** |  | **NHS Number (Health) *(if appropriate)*** |  |
| **Team** |  | **Social Worker** |  |
| **ATM** |  |
| **Team Manager** |  |

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| **Reason for the Need to Know / briefing** |
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| **Current Situation- What is the concern?** |
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| **Background** |
|  |
| **DCS/ADCS /HOS / SM Decision** |
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Version Control

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| **Version** | **Review Date**  | **Updated by** |
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