**NEED TO KNOW PROCEDURE**

**ESSENTIAL REPORTING FOR CHILDRENS SERVICES**

**March 2018**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The NTK procedure is common sense guidance to ensure that the right people are alerted about serious incidents quickly.

**Why do they need to know?**

* To ensure managers and senior officers are able to comply with legislative responsibilities and requirements
* To ensure managers and senior officers are swiftly appraised of the nature and number of high-level risks and incidents being responded to by staff, at any particular time.
* To ensure managers and senior officers are genuinely accountable, share the responsibility for taking appropriate action, and can provide support where necessary.
* To enable any emerging patterns and trends are spotted and strategic action taken where necessary.
* So that elected members, MPs, DfE or media enquiries can be answered from an informed position.

If you are not sure whether something is a serious incident, be safe and alert your manager. **Do not rely solely on email**. You must be sure the message has been received and understood. Once managers are aware, they are responsible for alerting others. When sending emails, please ensure that all messages begin **‘Need to Know’** in the subject heading.

This guidance is concerned with the most serious incidents that need to trigger the alert system. It is guidance however and cannot cover every type of incident. **If in doubt, alert.**

If you cannot contact your manager, contact your senior manager, failing that, another senior manager.

The Strategic Director and Director for Children’s Social Care & Early Help and Education working with the Directorate’s Senior Leadership Team (SMT) and members of corporate communications team will ensure that the Chief Operating Officer and other corporate colleagues and elected members are informed as necessary.

**2. CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRING A ‘NEED TO KNOW’ BRIEFING**

2.1 The Strategic Director and Director for Children’s Social Care & Early Help and Education need to be briefed by the most appropriate manager concerned with the incident in the following circumstances:

*N.B For the purpose of this briefing, serious is defined as anything life-threatening or potentially permanently disabling incidents of abuse or neglect affecting child or main care-giver*

* Death or serious abuse/accidents of any service user.
* Death of a child if not an open case.
* Violent incidents whilst on local authority or school premises, when referred.
* Where there is a likelihood of a Serious Case Review or Serious Incident Learning Process. Usually this is where a child has suffered serious harm as a result of professional failings
* All serious crimes committed by Children or young people where a custodial sentence is likely. This is defined under the YJB as ‘grave’ crimes which are also notified to the Youth Justice Board.
* All crimes/incidents involving children and young people when known that are considered gang related and involve the use of weapons
* An incident likely to result in significant media attention including any criminal proceedings.
* Any case with organised or large scale abuse
* Where a registered provider (residential, early years provider, Children Centre) is judged inadequate or closed following enforcement action by Ofsted;
* Matters likely to attract local or national interest
* Any matter which has or is likely to attract the attention of the media, elected members or Members of Parliament
* Missing children as identified below.

**For missing children the following circumstances must be adhered to.**

* Looked after children and young people who have been missing for 24 hours must have a need to know form completed
* Other missing children and young people who have been missing for 72 hours must have a Need to Know form completed (Unless the Police wish to publicise the child or young person, in which case an immediate Need to Know is required)
* Any child missing where there is immediate concern for their safety
* Any child missing for whatever period of time where media reporting has been agreed.
1. **FORMAT OF THE BRIEFING**

3.1 The relevant Team Manager must begin to collate information in respect of the incident immediately upon receipt of the information received and inform their Service Manager.

3.2 The Service Manager responsible for the business area involved in the particular incident, should wherever possible, complete the ‘Need to Know’ pro-forma. The detail must be confined to a level which will inform the Strategic Director and Director for Children’s Social Care & Early help of the seriousness of the incident, actual or potential risk to the Directorate and City Council, and of actions being taken to proactively manage the situation.

3.3 The ‘Need to Know’ is in addition to and will inform any statutory notifications that may be required.

3.4 Circumstances which are sufficiently serious to notify the Strategic Director and Director for Children’s Social Care & Early help, require the ‘need to know’ to be completed in draft by the Service Manager who will invariably have been involved in dealing with the matter. This must then be sent to the relevant Head of Service to review and determine further distribution and copied to the Head of Safeguarding.

* 1. In the event that the Head of Service is not available, it should be sent to the covering HOS.
	2. The ‘Need to Know’ should be copied to all managers involved in managing aspects of the incident. The Director Children’s Social Care & Early help and the strategic Director must routinely be included in all ‘Need to Know’ notifications. The Head of Service responsible will determine this.
	3. The Head of Service should also copy the ‘Need to Know’ to the press desk if the incident is likely to attract media attention.

**4. BRIEFING ELECTED MEMBERS AND CORPORATE COLLEAGUES**

4.1 The ‘Need to Know’ is also intended to be used to brief the Lead Member for Children’s Social Care & Early Help. The Director for Children’s Social Care & Early help and Strategic Director will decide whether the ‘Need to Know’ requires a wider confidential elected member briefing and what format it should take; for example there will be some times when Members will need to be informed about incidents in their Service, or if they are a member of the Governing Body of a school. To avoid delay, the HOS should send the ‘Need to Know’ to the lead member if appropriate.

4.3 Confidential member briefings will come from the Director for Children’s Social Care & Early help and/or the Strategic Director or the corporate communications team working on behalf of SMT. Any confidential member briefing will be copied to the managers involved with the incident for information.

4.4 Similarly, the Strategic Director and Director for Children’s Social Care & Early help will decide whether the matter requires the Chief Operating Officer or other corporate colleagues to be briefed. In all circumstances where the incident is likely to attract publicity, the Chief Operating Officer will be informed.

4.5 Depending on the circumstances, the ‘Need to Know’ may be used to brief corporate colleagues who need to be involved.

**5. SENDING THE ‘NEED TO KNOW’ BRIEFING**

5.1 ‘Need to Know’ notifications must be sent by email with ‘Need to Know’ in the subject box and marked urgent and confidential. The attachment must be clearly saved with a file name and date which is recognisable when stored in electronic folders.

5.2 All ‘Need to know’ forms will be stored electronically by the HOS Admin, email to HOS-admin@leicester.gov.uk. HOS Admin will store all versions in a named file and have a tracker to refer to with NTK title and date of the last version.

5.3 Updates must be added to the original ‘Need to know’ sent by the HOS.The updates must be dated and clearly identify the Service Manager and reviewing HOS who may be different from the originator. This way, an emerging picture is captured in one document for ease of reference and a defined conclusion is recorded to end the particular ‘need to know’ issue.

**6. ‘NEED TO KNOW’ BRIEFING PRO-FORMA**

6.1 The ‘Need to Know’ pro-forma that must be completed is available by clicking here



6.2 Please complete all sections as briefly and concisely as possible without omitting crucial detail

6.3 The Summary Page **must be completed by the person completing the need to** know but must not include identifying information regarding children or young people. Initials and date(s) of birth are sufficient as this will form information shared with elected members by the Director for Children’s Social Care & Early Help and Strategic Director.