



## Children's Services

# Need to Know Guidance and Procedure

2019

Date approved:

## Document Control Sheet

Purpose of document:	This procedure outlines the requirement for the Service Director and Assistant Director of Children and Safeguarding Services, and other senior colleagues and councillors where appropriate, to be made urgently aware of serious situations regarding children and families. This includes the death of a child whether living at home or in care.
Document ratified by: (group)	DMT
Date of meeting:	
If applicable, has an initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been completed?	N/A
Document lead and author, and their role:	Kirsten Taylor-Scarff, Policy Manager
What other documents should this be read in conjunction with:	

## Revisions

Version No.	Page/ Paragraph No.	Description of amendment	Date of Change

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## 1. Our Need to Know Procedure

This procedure outlines the circumstances and/or events which must be notified to those officers included in the 'Need to Know' distribution list and provides the templates to be used for reporting these circumstances/events.

It aims to be as comprehensive as possible but may inevitably omit some circumstances. If you are in doubt regarding the need for reporting an event or incident, you must consult with your line manager.

The purpose of the Need to Know form is to **urgently** alert Senior Managers to an incident and to provide the information needed to enable them to form an initial opinion on what, if any, action is required.

Failure to report incidents may mean that a child or young person is at risk of harm. Failure to report may also result in bringing either council into disrepute.

## 2. Reporting Serious Incidents

Immediate reporting of serious incidents enables Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council to:

- Provide support to the child or young person, parent/carer, member(s) of staff and attempt to resolve immediate difficulties;
- Inform the relevant authorities/regulatory bodies
- Alert and inform others including partners who need to be aware of the incident;
- Update risk assessments and put any risk management strategies in place;
- Manage any publicity and Council Reputation

## 3. Serious Incidents

The definition of a serious/Need to Know incident is broad. Below are examples of incidents that require reporting, but this is not an exhaustive list and there will be other scenarios not listed below that will fall under the procedure:

### 3.1 Categories of Serious Incidents

The following key areas represent categories of events which must be notified up the line management chain using the 'Need to Know' procedure. Each category has listed examples but note that these may not be exhaustive.

If there is any doubt about the need to notify senior managers, staff must consult with their line manager about the possible need to report an event or incident.

Category	Example Serious Incident
<b>Serious incident involving a child known to Children Services</b>	Serious accident
	Sudden unexpected death of a child
	Notifications of serious incidents in fostering or adoptive placements, or residential establishments in the PCC or CCC local authority areas
	Cases of serious communicable diseases in residential premises
	Children known to Children's Services who are missing overnight, or for more than four hours if the child is aged under 12
	Any actual or likely media coverage relating to a child in need, a child with a Protection Plan, or a Looked After Child
	A Child in Care has committed a serious crime
	A child who is subject to a Child Protection Plan becomes homeless, seriously injured or at immediate risk of harm
<b>Serious incident involving staff</b>	Assaults or threats to staff/members of the workforce
	Serious illness, injury or death of a member of staff/ members of the workforce
	Allegations against a member of staff that might lead to serious disciplinary action/ police action
	Any media coverage relating to members of staff or workforce, which may impact on the County Council
<b>Significant legal proceedings</b>	Staff working for or with PCC or CCC's Children's Services
	Members of the workforce in commissioned services
	Any that relate to the business of the two councils;
	Proceedings and judgements likely to attract public and/or media interest. This will include criminal trials resulting from child protection proceedings and youth offending
	Those with potentially high financial or policy implications
	Inquests

<b>Serious complaints and controversies</b>	Serious complaints and representations about Children’s Services, or about persons employed by them, must be notified to the relevant Head of Service and the Assistant Director. The Head of Service is responsible for notifying the corporate complaints team and ensuring that a response is provided within the specified timescale. They will also be responsible for briefing their Assistant Director about:
	Matters of public debate or anxiety
	Major complaints implicating the service
	Matters likely to attract adverse local or national press coverage
	Any matter which has, or is likely to attract the attention of the media, Members of the County Council, or Members of Parliament
	The Head of Service and the Assistant Director need to ensure that the Director of Children’s Services is aware of such serious issues as soon as practicably possible. The Head of Service must alert the Service Director if the Assistant Directors Children’s Services, are on annual leave.

## 4. Completing the Need to Know notification

### 4.1 Writing the ‘Need to Know’

The Head of Service responsible for the business area involved in the incident should, wherever possible, complete the ‘Need to Know’ notification. This is a managerial task. The detail should be confined to a level which will inform the Assistant Director of the seriousness of the incident, actual or potential risk to the Directorate and Local Authority, and of actions being taken to proactively manage the situation. A notification template is appended to this procedure

### 4.2 Sending the ‘Need to Know’

‘Need to Know’ notifications must be sent by email, with **URGENT AND CONFIDENTIAL: ‘Need to Know’** in the subject box, to all people referenced in 4.3.

Updates must be added to the original ‘Need to Know’ document. This will provide an emerging picture which is captured in one document for ease of reference and a defined conclusion is clearly recorded to end the particular ‘Need to Know’ issue.

All ‘Need to Know’ documents will be saved by the relevant Assistant Director for Children Services.

### **4.3 Who should be sent a 'Need to Know' notification**

The 'Need to Know' notification should be sent to:

Lou Williams	Service Director Children and Safeguarding
Sarah-Jane Smedmor	Assistant Director Children's Services
Nicola Curley	Assistant Director Children's Services
Alison Bennett	Assistant Director Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
Relevant Head of Service	

### **4.4 Briefing the Corporate Director: People and Communities, HR, Elected Members and Corporate Colleagues**

#### **Corporate Director and Lead Member**

The Service Director will decide whether the Lead Member for the particular area of business should be notified. If the decision is made that they should be notified, the original 'Need to Know' notification can be sent to them.

#### **Elected Members**

The 'Need to Know' notification form should not be used as a routine briefing to all members, or those who might have an interest in the situation (e.g. constituency members). Should the Assistant Director decide that a wider, confidential elected member briefing is required, he shall decide how to notify them (for example, if the incident occurred in their division, or if they are on the Governing Body of a school that is involved).

Confidential member briefings will come from the Director, Assistant Director, or the corporate communications team if requested by DMT. Any managers involved with the incident should be copied in for information.

#### **Corporate Colleagues**

The Service Director will decide whether the Executive Director, Chief Executive or other Corporate Colleagues need to be briefed.

The Assistant Director will decide if it is appropriate to send the 'Need to Know' notification to corporate colleagues who might need to be involved e.g. Adult Social Care, Internal Audit or Health and Safety.

### **4.5 Need to Know Timescales**

As soon as the incident is known to have taken place, the relevant Head of Service should be informed and a written Need to Know should be completed as soon as possible, but no later than 24 hours after the incident has occurred.

## 5. Appendix 1: Need to Know Form

### CONFIDENTIAL

#### CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE NEED TO KNOW BRIEFING

**To:** Lou Williams                      Service Director Children and Safeguarding  
 Sarah-Jane Smedmor              Assistant Director Children's Services  
 Nicola Curley                        Assistant Director Children's Services  
 Alison Bennett                      Assistant Director Safeguarding and Quality Assurance  
 Relevant Head of Service

**cc:**

<b>Date:</b>			
<b>From:</b>		<b>Role:</b>	
<b>Location:</b>	(work base)		
<b>Contact Details:</b>	(best number to contact the author)		

<b>Subject of Need to Know</b>			
ICS No.:		Name:	
DoB:		Status	(ie CIN/CP/CIC)
Address:			
Family:	(differentiate who is living in the family home and their relationship to the subject; if key family members are living in other households give these details and addresses)		
Professionals Involved	(this should include the allocated worker and manager as a minimum; key others should be included especially if they are involved in the incident)		

<b>Incident/Concern:</b> <i>[Reason for informing the director]</i>

<p><b>Background:</b></p> <p><i>Include for example the nature of the department's involvement,, legal status of the child, child protection registration status, previous related incidents etc. This is not intended to be an exhaustive chronology and the aim is to produce a short summary of the key points senior managers need to know. The ultimate potential audience for the Need to Know should also be considered, as it is not appropriate to include explicit detail (eg of sexual allegations) unless absolutely essential to the briefing.</i></p>
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**Current situation:**

*Include for example current situation of the child or member of staff and the risk this poses; other agencies involved, progress of investigations etc*

**Manager comment:**

*Include risk assessment and actions to mitigate the risk; statutory, corporate and departmental procedures being followed etc. Statutory notifications completed (Ofsted, HSE etc.) Managerial overview.*

**Lines to take for Members and/or Media:**

*Suggest a statement for elected members or lines to take in relation to media interest and knowledge of any current coverage/likelihood of this*

**Future Action:**

*For example, the next stages in a child protection investigation, forthcoming court appearances, action to be taken if a missing child returns, business continuity plans in relation to premises issues etc.*

**Next Update:**

*When is this expected and for what reason.*

*This form contains sensitive personal data; therefore the completing, viewing, recording and distribution of this should be in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and PCC/CCC local policies and procedures. If you are unsure how to handle this information please consult Insite for information or if you require further guidance please call the Information Management Team for advice.*