

## Emergency Contact and First-day Calling Procedures

There have been three recent cases, one in Calderdale, that have come to the attention of the Schools Safeguarding Advisor in Calderdale and the Calderdale Safeguarding Children Board (CSCB) which highlight the need for more robust emergency contacts and first-day calling procedures. These cases emphasise that these procedures are not only important for children who the school may consider 'Vulnerable' but actually important for all children as their absence in itself may be indicative that they have become vulnerable. The cases are summarised below for context:

- A mum died from an epileptic fit while bathing her children age 3 and 4. The next morning the school phoned home immediately after checking registers, no answer and so continued ringing through the contact list until they had an answer. A family member straight to the house and found mum had died, but the children were safe.
- A dad died from natural causes, Mum was working away from home, and the children were 2 and 4. In the morning Mum rang dad, no answer, but assumed he was doing the school run and continued with her working day. The school noted the absence of the 4 year old. They started first day calling 2 hours after registration and rang dad only, leaving a message. They did not ring anyone else on the contact list. They repeated the call to Dad at 3.40. Mum rang home at the end of her working day and now worried rang another school mum. Grandmother went to the home and could not gain access because of a key in the lock inside. The police gained entry at 8pm; the children had been alone with their deceased Dad all day.
- A mum died. School made a call to her when the child was not at school; the contact list was not used. No further calls were made. A letter was sent to the parent 3 days later. Eventually the house was entered 5 days later. The child, age 6 or 7 had also died. The child was non-verbal and had SEN.

As a result of these concerns please find below an example Emergency Contact form which asks for key information that may have been useful in the above and other circumstances, and also the recommended First-Day Calling Procedure. It is expected that schools will review their current procedures and adopt these recommendations where appropriate. This is an example form that does not need to be used in its entirety if recommendations can be added into current forms/templates.

It is imperative that schools also consider what arrangements have been made when children have been placed in Alternative Provision around Emergency Contacts and First-Day Calling Procedures. In the context of a child being absent without contact from parent please consider the following:

- Who is responsible for following up an absent child?
- Are the Emergency Contacts shared – when/how?
- Would the same first-day calling procedure be followed and by whom?
- Does the school accurately record the attendance of children in Alternative Provision?

## Primary Schools - First-Day Calling Procedure

- 1) Registers saved
- 2) Late children checked against registers if recorded separately
- 3) Absence calls listened to/attendance emails checked
- 4) First day text sent to first name on contact list within half an hour of school start time asking for response
- 5) If no response to text start calling first name on contact list within 45 minutes of school start time
- 6) Ring down contact list until reply is received, ensuring where possible that someone from outside of the family home has been contacted
- 7) Alert HT/DSL that this child is absent and no contact has been made within an hour of school start time
- 8) If no reply send second text and email to first and second contacts on list
- 9) Contact any other agencies involved to ascertain whether they have any further information which may be helpful, or know the whereabouts of the child or family, and contact MAST to see if there has been any incident that they are aware of
- 10) Home Visit made if possible/appropriate by school or other agency involved
- 11) Complete Risk Assessment:
  - **No apparent risk (Absent):** There is no apparent risk of danger to either the child or the public. This may be appropriate for children who you have reason to believe are absent from school but not at harm due to previous patterns of behaviour or information from other people eg. a child who often goes on holiday at this time of year and parents always fail to contact. School can continue to make enquiries but it would not be proportionate to contact police at this stage.
  - **Low/Medium risk:** The risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as possible but minimal or the risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as likely but not serious. This may be relevant for those children where there are no additional vulnerabilities however you have minimal contact information and making parental contact is always difficult.
  - **High risk:** The risk of serious harm to the subject or the public is assessed as very likely. This would be relevant for children already considered vulnerable. This may be due to risk of child sexual exploitation or abuse and also consider protected characteristics; mental health, forced marriage, honour based violence, trafficking, and female genital mutilation. This may also be relevant for those children where the absence and lack of ability to make parental contact is highly unusual.
- 12) If assessed as 'No Apparent Risk' – as a school you can make the decision to continue to make enquires and not contact the police if you do not feel that this is necessary or proportionate. These cases should not be ignored and must be monitored over time and consideration given to escalation if there is a change to the circumstances that has increased the level of risk
- 13) If assessed as 'Low/Medium Risk' – contact the Police on 101 and complete the referral checklist (*please also see Key Information on last page of this procedure*)
- 14) If assessed as 'High Risk' and there is a need for an immediate response then contact the Police on 999 (*please also see Key Information on last page of this procedure*)
- 15) School enquiries continue and any further information shared with Police

## Primary Schools First-Day Calling Procedure – Checklist

(to accompany referral to Police 101)

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name & Number: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) First day text sent to first name on contact list at \_\_\_\_\_ am:
  - a. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) No response received to text so called first name on contact list at \_\_\_\_\_ am
- 3) No contact made so rang down contact list
  - a. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) No reply so sent second text and email to first and second contacts at \_\_\_\_\_ am
- 5) Other agencies involved with child:

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- 6) Any information from MAST? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) A Home Visit was made at \_\_\_\_\_ am to the following address:

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By (please tick):

- a. School
- b. Other agency (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- c. It has not been possible to do a Home Visit

Comments regarding home visit or reason why home visit has not been done:

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- 8) Child is assessed as Low/Medium Risk

## Key Information

**(Relevant for both Primary and Secondary when contacting the Police)**

When contacting the police on either 101 or 999 this is the key information that they will need to know in order to respond appropriately:

- Name/Gender of the child and any aliases with correct spellings
- Child's Date of Birth
- Description of child
- Home addresses (and any other addresses that may be relevant)
- When were they last seen
- Have this behaviour happened before/have they been missing before?
- Do they have any illnesses?
- Do they take any Medication if so when was it last taken / when is it due again
- Are there any issues with Alcohol/Drug misuse?
- Do they have a mobile phone number? (Has someone tried to contact and what was the response? Was it turned off? Was a message left?)
- Does the person use Social Media? (What sites? Has anyone checked for activity?)
- Any known locations of where they may be? /Any known associates? /Any contacts they you have concerns about?