**Domestic Violence Breakthrough Project**

**Domestic Violence notifications to schools: City wide roll-out.**

As part of a range of work to tackle domestic violence and abuse the Leeds Partnership has developed a process to provide better support to children affected by domestic violence. This initiative draws on the principles of a police led initiative “Operation Encompass” which was first developed in Plymouth and later adopted in other force areas including Merseyside.

Since the 1st February, we have piloted notifying schools and educational establishments when one of their pupils has been present at an incident of domestic violence where the police have attended. This notification has been done the following morning- ideally before the start of the school day.

The purpose of the notification is not to duplicate or replace any safeguarding interventions that may occur as a result of the police intervention, but to provide information to schools so that they can better support the pupil the next day in whatever way is appropriate. The process will always be followed in conjunction with current safeguarding procedures and guidelines.

The process starts with a daily download from police systems, detailing all domestic violence incidents they have attended, with names and dates of birth of any children present. This is then crossed checked with the LCC school admission data base to identify the schools attended. A phone call will then be made by LCC staff to designated safeguarding leads in the schools to inform them of the incident.

The pilot was delivered across schools in the JESS, CHESS and Bramley clusters and has been co-designed with a range of partners including the Police, Children’s Services, Education Safeguarding, Schools, Safer Leeds, Families First and Clusters. It has been further informed by consultation with parents, teachers and educational psychology amongst others. The project is being overseen by the Front Door Safeguarding Hub Board and the Domestic Violence Programme Board both of which report to the Safer Leeds Executive.

 A protocol for the project has been drawn up. This protocol includes information on the type of responses that schools/ teachers may wish to consider. As part of the protocol schools are being asked to write to parents to inform them about their participation in the scheme.

In order to capture any learning and improve the process the pilot has been evaluated through face to face feedback sessions with schools and the administration of a questionnaire with safeguarding leads in schools. Feedback has included;

*“We were able to tell the class teacher to keep an eye on the child.”*

*“We chatted to the child and played alongside her to see if she was ok”*

*“We were not aware of the DV before and it helped us understand what else might be going on for the family.”*

*“I spoke to Mum and was able to offer her some support.”*

*One parent said it was a really good idea, they had witnessed DV as a child and this would have helped them”*

*“I believe the DV notification process is a fantastic resource to enable us to support our children and families.” – Whitecote Primary School*

*“Being aware first thing makes it easing for school to provide the right support.” “Prior to receiving notifications school was sometimes unaware of any incidents until social care began assessments.” – Hunslet Carr Primary School.*

**In light of the success of the pilot the Domestic Violence School Notifications will be rolled out across the city to all schools commencing on 18th April 2016.**

For further Information please contact.

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