

Emergency Contact and First day Calling Procedures - Revised Document (September 2023)

As a result of recent cases where young children have been harmed or died as a result of their presence in the family home when a lone parent or carer has died, Calderdale Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP) has highlighted the need for more robust emergency contacts and first day calling procedures. The cases concerned emphasise that these procedures are not only important for children who the school may consider 'vulnerable' but 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 aged 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 father died from natural causes. Mum was working away from home. Their children aged 2 and 4 years were in the house at the time of the death. In the morning Mum rang Dad with no response, but assumed he was doing the school run and continued with her working day. The school picked up on the absence of the 4-year-old leaving left a message on deceased father's voicemail. They repeated the call later in the afternoon. Mum rang home at the end of her working day and now worried, triggered concerns requiring action. Grandmother went to the home but could not gain access. The police forced an entry that evening and whilst the children were physically unharmed, they had been alone with their deceased father 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 had also died. The child was non-verbal and had Special Educational Needs.

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?

The following procedures meet all requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023

Emergency Contact Form

Child's Details

Child's Surname:

Child's Forename:

Date of Birth:

Year Group:

Address:

Child's Phone Number (If have own phone):

Adult(s) at this address

Siblings within school:

Siblings' Year Groups:

Contact Details

(Please include at least one contact that does not live at the same address as the child)

Contact 1:

Name:

Relationship to Child:

Address:

Parental Responsibility? (Y/N)

Is this person able to collect? (Y/N)

Could the child stay overnight? (Y/N)

Contact Number:

Additional Number:

Additional Number:

Email Address:

Contact 2:

Name:

Relationship to Child:

Address:

Parental Responsibility? (Y/N)

Is this person able to collect? (Y/N)

Could the child stay overnight? (Y/N)

Contact Number:

Additional Number:

Additional Number:

Email Address:

Contact 3:

Name:

Relationship to Child:

Address:

Parental Responsibility? (Y/N)

Is this person able to collect? (Y/N)

Could the child stay overnight? (Y/N)

Contact Number:

Additional Number:

Additional Number:

Email Address:

Contact 4:

Name:

Relationship to Child:

Address:

Parental Responsibility? (Y/N)

Is this person able to collect? (Y/N)

Could the child stay overnight? (Y/N)

Contact Number:

Additional Number:

Additional Number:

Email Address:

Contact Details of Key Professionals

(Eg. for child who is CP or CLA– Social Worker/Virtual School, or YOT Worker)

Contact 1:

Name

Relationship to Child

Contact Number

Additional Number

Additional Number

Email Address

Contact 2:

Name

Relationship to Child

Contact Number

Additional Number

Additional Number

Email Address

Date Form Completed:

Date Received in School:

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 enquiries 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:

First day text sent to first name on contact list at ...am:

Name:

Number

No response received to text so called first name on contact list at...am

No contact made so rang down contact list

Contact 1 Name:

Contact 1 Number:

Contact 2 Name:

Contact 2 Number:

Contact 3 Name:

Contact 3 Number:

No reply so sent second text and email to first and second contacts at _____am

Other agencies involved with child:

Any information from MAST?:

Home Visit was made at ...am to the following address:

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:

Child is assessed as: Low/Medium Risk

Secondary Schools – First Day Calling Procedure

There is an expectation with the secondary procedure that the child may be in more of a position to access help if required, and also due to the volume of children within a secondary school a more realistic procedure needs to be in place for dealing with a greater number of pupils.

- 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 an hour of school start time asking for response
- 5) If no reply, send second text and email to first contact on list stating that the child is absent and the school are unaware of their whereabouts as no response
- 6) Alert HT/DSL that this child is absent and no response has been received
- 7) 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
- 8) Home Visit made if possible/appropriate by school or other agency involved
- 9) If no response by afternoon, ring down contact list until reply is received stating that this child has not been in school all day and this will be recorded as an unauthorised contact if no response from parent is received
- 10) If known also try child's own phone number and check with friends for any information
- 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 no 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, or a child who often is truant from school. 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

Secondary Schools First Day Calling Procedure – Checklist (to accompany referral to Police)

Name of School:

Contact Name & Number:

First day text sent to first name on contact list at ...am:

Name:

Number:

Second text and email sent to first contact on list stating that the child is absent and the school are unaware of their whereabouts as no response at ...am

Other agencies involved with child:

Any information from MAST?:

A Home Visit was made at ...am to the following address:

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:

Rang down contact list stating that 'this child has not been in school all day and this will be recorded as an unauthorised contact if no response from parent is received':

Contact 1 Name:

Contact 1 Number:

Contact 2 Name:

Contact 2 Number:

Contact 3 Name:

Contact 3 Number:

Tried to contact using child's own phone number at ...am/pm. Number:

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 in emergency situation) this is the key information that they will need to know in order to respond appropriately:

- Full name, preferred name, gender of the child.
- Date of Birth
- Description of child inc. hair colour, height, weight, distinguishing features and any recent photo
- Current home addresses (and any other addresses that may be relevant)
- Habits, hobbies
- When were they last seen and what was the likely trigger for absence?
- Has this behaviour happened before/have they been missing before?
- Any health condition(s)?
- Any Special Educational Needs or a Disability?
- Do they take any medication if so when was it last taken / when is it due again?
- 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?)
- Are they on any app which allows tracking of their mobile phone?
- Do they use Social-Media? (What sites? Has anyone checked for activity?)
- Do they have access to money?
- Do they have a bus pass (Name and number on pass required)?
- Nature and reason for absence if known: consider recent events or precipitating factors
- Ascertaining the likely intentions of the missing child: include frame of mind – may be available from family and/or friends
- Establishing the likely whereabouts of the missing child: favourite places, likely persons including relatives they may visit
- Who are known associates, and any evidence of concerning associate contacts?
- Previous absences and places found: any pattern in their previous absence behaviour including accounts provided?
- Known risk factors: Suicidal, Self-harm, Depressed, User of alcohol/drugs, Vulnerable to exploitation
- Are they known to Children's Social Care e.g. CP/CIN Plan or Early Help/Interventions? (Inform MAST if subject to a plan)
- Actions necessary on being found: Who to notify and where to be taken etc.