

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This matter is a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has been included in the relevant Forward Plan

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (CHILDREN'S SERVICES) TO CABINET

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN: IMPLEMENTATION OF OPERATION 'ENCOMPASS' IN THE BOROUGH

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet's approval for the implementation of Operation 'Encompass' in the Borough, an initiative which ensures the police share timely information with schools so that schools can provide important support to children who have witnessed or have been affected by incidents of domestic abuse.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That Cabinet approves the implementation of Operation 'Encompass' within the Borough with effect from 1st April 2021.**

3.0 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 Operation Encompass is a charitable organisation, established in 2011 and which recognises the necessity for police to share timely information with schools in order that children can be supported at school following domestic abuse Incidents they may have witnessed or been affected by.

- 3.2 The key principles of the initiative are as follows:

- To ensure timely notifications of domestic abuse incidents are provided to designated safeguarding leads and deputies within the school environment.
- That these notifications enable schools to provide appropriate support for children impacted by domestic abuse on arrival at school or at the earliest opportunity.
- Increase safeguarding for children by enhanced information sharing between schools and Police.
- Be open about the school's involvement with Operation Encompass with children, parents, carers', governors, staff and anyone else connected to the school.
- Assist in reducing the impact on a child by supporting children affected by domestic abuse at school.

- The education establishments are not to be evidence gatherers or ask about the incident but simply be there for the children and provide support, understanding that the child may attend school needing a higher degree of support.

4.0 PROPOSAL AND JUSTIFICATION

- 4.1 Operation Encompass has already been implemented in South Yorkshire with police and schools in Rotherham, Doncaster and Sheffield participating in the scheme.
- 4.2 The model operates by an email exchange between the police and children’s social care giving the details of the child/ren present during a domestic violence incident that has occurred overnight. A business support worker then researches the named school and the named school is contacted via email. The premise is to alert the school by 8.30am or at the earliest opportunity to inform, through a standard agreed e-mail, detailing the child’s name, date of birth and address, with a standard phrase simply saying that the school is being notified as part of the Operation ‘Encompass’ agreement.
- 4.3 There is no further information detailed in the e-mail and the school is asked to use their normal safeguarding procedures if concerned about the child’s presentation in school. The school is not requested or required to contact children’s social care for details of the incident. If the incident is of sufficient seriousness, or the child is an open case, the school will be contacted by children’s social care as part of the screening, investigation, assessment or plan for the child.
- 4.4 In order to set up Operation ‘Encompass’ education establishments are invited to join the programme and within the school a trained key adult is appointed usually the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The key adult is notified through an Operation Encompass e-mail without any detail of the incident. The premise is that the key adult is notified prior to the start of the next school day (or as early as feasibly possible) enables a plan for appropriate support to be made for that child so that all interactions, from when the child first arrives at the school gates, are of a supportive nature.
- 4.5 As part of the scheme the education establishment will have access to a dedicated educational psychology helpline for advice and support (currently available to all schools due to the pandemic).
- 4.6 Operation Encompass will not change how children’s social care currently manage domestic abuse notifications received by the police. Notifications which are high or medium risk are screened by children’s social care and a decision is made on the action to be taken based on the following
- :
- Open case, forward to child’s social worker
 - No further action/consultation
 - Progress to referral/assessment
 - Strategy meeting

The outcome is fed back to the Protecting Vulnerable People Unit within South Yorkshire Police.

- 4.7 Standard risk domestic violence notifications, which generally detail very low-level incidents are dealt with as follows:
- Open case, forward to child's social worker for information and consideration
 - TED check – review information by public health in the integrated front door.
 - Not open case, forward to early help who send out targeted information in respect of what services are available at the local family centre.
- 4.8 In considering the outcome of feedback to the Protecting Vulnerable People Unit, it is important to note that the way domestic abuse notifications are screened and dealt with and the support provided will not change with the implementation of Operation Encompass.
- 4.9 In Barnsley, a joint Police and Children's Service task and finish group has been set up consisting of the Police's Operation Encompass lead and lead officers from both Children's Social Care, Community Safety Partnership, Communities Directorate, Early Help and Prevention Services who are meeting regularly with a proposed go live date of April 2021.
- 4.10 Awareness raising and initial action planning was considered by the Barnsley Alliance Executive on the 1st February 2021 with awareness raising commencing with Primary School Cluster Leads on the 4th February 2021, following which information will be disseminated to all schools.
- 4.11 A full programme of communications and training will be established for education settings and implemented in partnership with the Police. A suite of documents, including the information sharing protocol as used by Rotherham, Sheffield and Doncaster will be adopted by Barnsley.
- 4.12 Education establishments participating in the scheme have clear signage in their buildings that this setting is part of the scheme and this is clearly conveyed to parents who understand that information will be shared by the police with children's social care and that the school will be notified.
- 4.13 Information provided by South Yorkshire Police indicates that in the ten years during which the scheme has been running nationally, there have been no legal challenges about data sharing, consent or any other matter. The scheme is supported by Her Majesties Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), OFSTED and across central government departments as an important layer in ensuring the safeguarding of children from harm.

5.0 CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

- 5.1 There is no statutory or mandatory responsibility to implement the Operation 'Encompass' initiative within the Borough. However, it would provide an additional layer of assurance that vulnerable children and young people, at risk of harm, through having witnessed or affected by incidents of domestic abuse, are being supported by their school in order to maintain their wellbeing without any additional costs or resources.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE/SERVICE USERS

- 6.1 The formal implementation of Operation 'Encompass' will prove to be an effective measure in helping support all vulnerable school children witnessing or affected by domestic abuse across the whole of the Borough and in preventing the continuation of such abuse, particularly through early help and prevention.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no financial implications to consider as a result of this proposal.

8.0 EMPLOYEE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no employee implications directly arising through consideration of this report.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no legal implications for the Council to consider as a result of this proposal.

10.0 CUSTOMER AND DIGITAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 No such implications have emerged during the compilation of this report.

11.0 COMMUNICATIONS IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Please see Paragraphs 4.10 to 4.12 of this report.

12.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 12.1 Please see Paragraph 4.9 of this report. In addition, the Community Safety Partnership and the Communities Directorate and the Council's Senior Management Team has considered and endorsed the proposal to formally implement Operation 'Encompass' in the Borough.

13.0 THE CORPORATE PLAN AND THE COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

- 13.1 The implementation of Operation 'Encompass' will provide an additional layer of assurance in support of our corporate priority of safeguarding vulnerable children from harm; preventing children from becoming subject to a child protection plan or the need to enter care.

14.0 PROMOTING EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

- 14.1 Operation 'Encompass' will provide universal support to all children at risk of witnessing or being affected by domestic abuse. Designated school safeguarding leads will be well-placed to provide appropriate support to any pupils with specific needs including those with protected characteristics in order to promote equality and eliminate any inadvertent discrimination.

15.0 TACKLING THE IMPACT OF POVERTY

15.1 Please see Paragraphs 16.1 and 16.2 of this report.

16.0 TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES

16.1 Adverse childhood experiences, such as the impact of domestic abuse, can often become the cause of risky behaviour (including greater vulnerability to criminal exploitation) and chronic health conditions later in the life-course of an individual. As these vulnerable children become adults their early experiences can increase the risk of them being ill-equipped to be parents to their own children, thereby reinforcing a cycle of disadvantage.

16.2 Operation 'Encompass' will help statutory safeguarding partners and relevant agencies in the Borough to improve their understanding of such adverse experiences and to provide better support to vulnerable children, so they do not miss out on early help and intervention, including therapeutic help.

17.0 REDUCTION OF CRIME AND DISORDER

17.1 Please see Paragraph 16.1 of this report

18.0 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

18.1 No risks have been identified or anticipated by the Operation 'Encompass' Task and Finish Group in the proposed implementation of this initiative.

19.0 HEALTH, SAFETY AND EMERGENCY RESILIENCE ISSUES

19.1 The proposed implementation date for Operation 'Encompass' is 1st April this year and with schools having fully re-opened from 8th March, Operation Encompass will add assurance that the progress and protection of all vulnerable children, including those who have witnessed or been affected by domestic violence, will continue to be monitored and tracked by statutory safeguarding partners and relevant agencies. Schools will continue to be supported in maintaining Covid-secure learning environments for the duration of the current restrictions.

20.0 COMPATIBILITY WITH THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

20.1 The proposal is compatible with the Articles and Protocols of the Convention and the Rights of the Child to be protected from serious harm.

21.0 CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY

21.1 There are no implications for the local environment, tackling climate change or the conservation of biodiversity emerging through the implementation of Operation 'Encompass'

22.0 GLOSSARY

22.1 None applicable

23.0 LIST OF APPENDICES

23.1 There are no appendices to this report.

24.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

24.1 If you would like to inspect background papers for this report, please email governance@barnsley.gov.uk so that appropriate arrangements can be made

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Financial Implications/Consultation



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Joshua Amahwe (03/03/2021)

*(To be signed by senior Financial Services officer
where no financial implications)*