

14 July 2014

Agenda Item: 11

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

PROGRESS OF ENCOMPASS NOTTINGHAMSHIRE: INFORMING SCHOOLS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE INCIDENTS

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform and update the Committee on the progress of the Encompass Nottinghamshire initiative, which involves informing schools of medium and high risk domestic abuse incidents which a child has witnessed, been in the household at the time or been affected by.

Information and Advice

Background

2. In September 2013, a proposal was submitted to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Governance Group to inform schools (primary and secondary) of domestic violence incidents, when one of their pupils is involved. The aim was to equip schools with the information to understand the root cause of a child's behaviour and to best support their development. This proposal was to address the current gap in communication between police and schools which was identified by the Domestic Violence Strategy Group for Nottinghamshire (now Domestic and Sexual Abuse Executive), which is accountable to the Safer Nottinghamshire Board (SNB).
3. Routine information sharing with schools around domestic violence when children are involved has been identified as a gap both locally and nationally. Currently a child's school is not routinely informed of domestic abuse incidents, when one of their pupils has been involved. In Nottinghamshire, two Domestic Homicide Reviews since 2011 identified the lack of communication with schools as an issue.
4. There is strong evidence to show that experiencing domestic violence has a negative impact on children's development and emotional wellbeing¹. Nationally, schools have identified a gap in their knowledge about the child's family circumstances and may not be aware of the root cause of a child's behaviour. Therefore, schools may not have the knowledge to provide the appropriate support.
5. Encompass Nottinghamshire creates a process to embed routine, intelligent and timely information sharing between the Council, police and schools regarding domestic

¹ The research and evidence base was gathered, evaluated and is stated in the business case for Encompass.

violence. The Encompass model is a process which informs schools of domestic violence incidents (involving children) which have been reported to the police by the next working day. The information is communicated to the 'Key Adult' in the school, the designated Safeguarding Lead. This includes domestic violence incidents that children are involved in or witness, and households in which children live but are not present at the time of the incident. This model enables schools to have more accurate information on the factors impacting on a child's life so that they are more aware of the child's family situation and understand the impact.

6. Teachers play a unique role in having daily contact with pupils. Therefore, they are able to play a key role in supporting the child, if they are made aware of the incident(s). The Encompass model equips the school's Safeguarding Lead with information to better support them in their safeguarding role. It allows for early intervention to support the needs of a child.
7. The Encompass model is an approach piloted in Plymouth by Devon and Cornwall Police to inform schools of domestic violence incidents by the next working day. It was piloted to address the gap in communication between police, education and social care on domestic abuse, which has also been identified in Nottinghamshire. The initiative has also been developed and implemented in other areas, such as Knowsley, Coventry, Cumbria and Leicestershire.
8. The Encompass model has been tailored for use across Nottinghamshire and the outcomes of the model are:
 - a process for informing schools of reported domestic violence incidents where one of their students has been involved during the next school day
 - intelligent, secure information sharing between the police and a 'Key Adult' in schools
 - early intervention to equip schools with the right training and information to support children and young people who are affected by domestic violence.
9. This is a targeted initiative focusing on:
 - high and medium risk domestic abuse incidents, as this supports the most vulnerable children in terms of the severity of incidents
 - school aged children; 4-18 years old
 - all types of schools (primary, secondary, academies, special educational needs, non-state)
 - domestic abuse incidents reported to the police
 - domestic abuse incidents reported during school term-time.
 - children and young people that live and attend school within the County borders.

Update on Progress

10. An Encompass implementation group was set up to oversee and support the implementation of the initiative. The group has been meeting bi-monthly since early 2014. It includes colleagues from social care, the MASH, early help, police, schools, public health and wider health.

11. Colleagues from the implementation group visited Knowsley in March 2014 to see how their Encompass process worked, the training given to schools and the governance arrangements. This has helped to shape the process in Nottinghamshire.

Process of Informing Schools:

12. The process is going to be undertaken by the MASH via a phone call. The police sergeant who manages the police Domestic Abuse Support Unit (DASU) in the MASH will filter for the medium and high risk cases each day involving children. These cases will be triaged by a social work team manager, discussed and shared with the Education Advisor in the MASH (previously a head teacher) each morning. The Education Advisor, with support from the MASH Officers will phone the school to inform them of the incident during the morning/lunchtime following the incident.
13. The Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH) risk assessment form, which is completed by police response officers when they attend a domestic abuse incident, has been updated to record the name of the child's school. The Education Advisor will also check the schools database system, Capita One, to cross-check the school name on the DASH form. The DASH form also states that the information collected may be shared with the child's school where a child is involved. Police training is being updated to also reflect this and a factsheet has been produced for police response officers.
14. The process is going to be trialled in the Rushcliffe and Newark/Sherwood districts from the end of September 2014. The trial will be evaluated for three months until the end of December 2014. Following evaluation and development, the initiative will be rolled out county wide in early 2015.

School briefings and support pathway:

15. Encompass Nottinghamshire is being presented to all Nottinghamshire head teachers during the summer head teacher briefings in June and July. A factsheet for schools has been produced and will be distributed at the briefings.
16. Short training briefings for school designated teachers/appropriate school staff will be held in the two trial districts in mid-September 2014, with two briefings for each locality. The aim of the briefing is to give schools a background to the warning signs of domestic abuse, how the Encompass process will work, and the referral pathways available.
17. The designated safeguarding teacher training will signpost to the Encompass initiative, to make staff aware of the initiative on an ongoing basis. Wider Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Board (NSCB) training across the County will also be updated to inform professionals about Encompass Nottinghamshire, in order to promote wider awareness.
18. A pathway for Encompass is being developed to inform schools of the process. The pathway will also outline the services available if schools feel that a child or family require further support. If the school has escalating safeguarding concerns, they will be signposted to the MASH. For all other support services the pathway will signpost schools to the Early Help Unit for referrals to Council and voluntary sector services.

Early Years Cases:

19. The MASH collected data on the domestic abuse incidents involving children and their ages, for two weeks during April 2014. Details were given on a sample of 210 children and show the high percentage of children under school age that are affected:
- 0-5 years 47%
 - 5-12 years 43%
 - 12-18 years 10%
20. As a result of the high proportion of incidents involving children under school age (0-4 years), these incidents are going to be shared with the Early Help Unit (EHU), which widens the original business case to pre-school aged children. The Early Help Unit will check whether the affected children are known to a Children's Centre or family support service through System One and contact this agency to inform them of the incident, where possible. The process is currently being developed by the Early Help Unit.

Other Options Considered

21. The implementation group considered alternative communication methods to inform schools of incidents. The methods considered included email and via an online secure web portal. However, consultation with schools revealed that a phone call was the most convenient way for schools to receive information as administrative staff can be made aware of the importance of an 'Encompass call' and ensure that the appropriate member of staff is identified.
22. Informing schools of all risk-levels of domestic abuse incidents was considered (standard, medium, high). However, standard risk covers a whole range of incidents which are not likely to involve a child or young person face-to-face or in the household (for example, text messages). There is also an issue of consent for sharing standard level incidents. Medium and high risk cases focus on the most vulnerable children being impacted on by domestic abuse.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

23. Following the research and analysis of the gap in informing sharing with schools about domestic abuse incidents, it was recommended that a consistent approach was developed and implemented. Informing schools of medium and high risk domestic abuse incidents via a telephone call the next school day after an incident means that a consistent approach is embedded and delivered by the MASH.

Statutory and Policy Implications

24. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

25. The costs are being met by service areas. The MASH Education Advisor, employed in the MASH (previously a head teacher) since April 2014 will make the phone calls to school as part of the daily role, with support from MASH Officers.

Implications for Service Users

26. This initiative is likely to result in an improved response to children and young people experiencing domestic abuse, as a result of schools being made aware of incidents and a more joined-up approach being in place.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the progress of the Encompass Nottinghamshire initiative be noted.

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Constitutional Comments

27. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (KLA 26/06/14)

28. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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