

The impact of domestic violence on children

'Witnessing domestic abuse is as harmful to a child as being directly on the receiving end of the less serious variety of physical violence since there is no emotional refuge for a child who has one care giver a threat and the other frightened'.

(Building Great Britons, 2015)

Professionals realise that being exposed to domestic abuse is classed as an adverse childhood experience and that the more adverse childhood experiences a child has the greater the negative impact upon their mental and physical health and well-being now and in the future.

What is Operation Encompass?

Operation Encompass is the reporting to schools before 9am on a school day when a child or young person has been involved or exposed to a domestic abuse incident the previous evening.

The information is given to a school's Key Adult (usually the Head Teacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead) to enable support to be given dependent on the needs and wishes of the child.

What are the benefits?

- Earlier and more effective intervention to reduce the impact of the trauma on the child
- Improved information sharing and multi-agency responses to the child and family with quicker and better informed assessments of risk
- Reduced stigma and secrecy that may lead eventually to a more open discussion of domestic violence.
- Enables children to feel secure in talking about domestic violence to a trusted adult in school.

What can schools do to help?

- Ensure that the Key Adult details are up to date on the Operation Encompass system, and if necessary nominate a member of staff to complete the training (online training is now available)
- Add information about Operation Encompass on the school website, e.g. what is Operation Encompass and what school will do if a call is received
- Consider ways to support the family and child/ren (incl silent/covert), be that providing information about local support groups, a coffee and a chat, before or after school care, access to holiday clubs, the instigation of Early Help (see next section – responsibilities of the Key Adult)
- Provide a 'Safe Space' for victims of Domestic Violence and Abuse to use (a confidential space with DV&A leaflets & information, a place to talk, to make phone calls)
- Consider key members of staff completing DV&A training e.g. The Devon Domestic Violence and Abuse training

Responsibilities of the key adult:

- Must be a member of SLT and have attended the Operation Encompass training
- Must provide up to date contact numbers to the Police with an indication of the time from which he/she is available to take the Operation Encompass call
- The Operation Encompass file for each child containing school actions and record of calls must be kept in the same way and also linked with other Child Protection/Safeguarding information on the child
- All Deputies must have been taken through the confidentiality aspects of Operation Encompass prior to them being able to take a call. Once this has happened then the relevant police contact should be informed of the identity of that Deputy
- Ensure that all staff understand the confidential nature of any information passed to them and that this information must be treated in the same way as any other Child Protection information

- Office staff must be informed that when an Operation Encompass call comes in the Key Adult must be sought immediately
- Once the Operation Encompass call comes in, the Key Adult assumes responsibility for the information being acted upon within school, via either silent or covert support being offered to the child/children and families

Who should know about Operation Encompass?

- The Key Adult must inform parents that the school is part of Operation Encompass, using the basic template given to each school, which can be amended to suit the school's individual requirements
- The Key Adult must inform the Governing Body that the school is part of Operation Encompass and the Governor with responsibility for Safeguarding should have a working knowledge of the project
- The Head/Governing Body and Key Adult should consider including information about Operation Encompass in the school's prospectus, thus ensuring that all new parents are informed of involvement