

Merseyside Multi-Agency Protocol

St. Helens Operation Encompass (For Schools & Nurseries)



St Helens
**Safeguarding Children
Partnership**

Knowsley Safeguarding Children Board



Merseyside Joint-Agency Operation Encompass Protocol

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Introduction

This protocol sets out a joint-agency procedure to provide, by early intervention, appropriate support for children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse in their household.

What is domestic abuse?

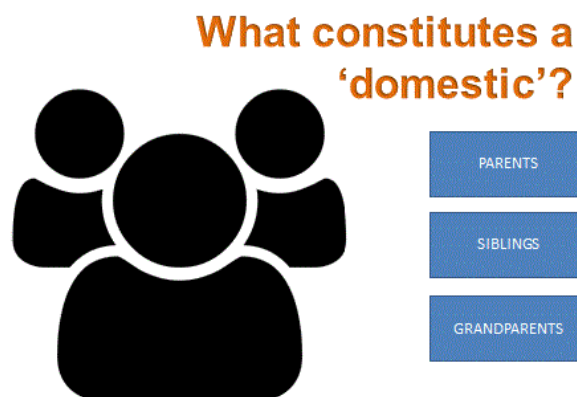
The Government definition:

‘Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- *psychological*
 - *physical*
 - *sexual*
 - *financial*
 - *emotional*
- **Controlling behaviour:** A range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.
- **Coercive behaviour:** An act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

This definition above, which is not a legal definition, includes issues of concern to black and minority ethnic (BME) communities such as ‘honour’ based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group

The ‘domestic’ make up of ‘Family members’ are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, and grandparents, whether directly related, in laws or stepfamily. For anyone involved outside of this immediate family group, the incident would be referred to as an assault rather than a domestic situation.



Domestic abuse is a safeguarding children issue; statistics show that in **90% of cases children are present in a household during a domestic abuse incident**. Often the following day children are ill-prepared to deal with the school day.

Operation Encompass is the implementation of key partnership working between Merseyside Police and designated school/nursery staff (Key Adults). Operation Encompass works through information sharing between Police and a named Key Adult in the school/nursery.

Working together to safeguard children, Merseyside Police will inform specially trained Key Adults within schools and nurseries about any domestic abuse incident where the child or young person has been present, to allow that setting to take appropriate steps to support their pupil during what could be an emotionally difficult day. Key adults within the settings are then able to accommodate the school/nursery day to lessen the impact and to support the child if they need it. In its simplest form, they are given some leeway, comfort and support. This can make a huge difference to children and allows them to have a safe space.

The information shared with settings will be only that which is required to safeguard children including:

- Date and time of incident.
- Brief circumstances.
- Police action if appropriate.

2. **Aims**

This Protocol does not replace or supersede existing protocols, or singularly address child welfare. The Protocol should always be followed in conjunction with the current safeguarding procedures and practitioners' guidelines and is designed to reinforce safeguarding and ensure children's well-being is of paramount importance.

By sharing this information under Operation Encompass, it is hoped that children and young people who are experiencing domestic abuse at home, will have access to responsive emotional health and wellbeing support after a domestic abuse incident. Schools/nurseries will receive information when:

- Police have been called out to a domestic abuse incident.
- The child is present in the household at the time of the incident.
- The child is of nursery/school age.

This knowledge, given to settings through Operation Encompass, allows the provision of immediate early intervention through silent or overt support dependent upon the needs and wishes of the child.

3. **Legal Requirements**

Section 11(2) of the Children Act, 2004 requires Local Authorities and the Police to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children. This enactment provides conditions under schedule 2 (5b) and schedule 3 (7(1) (b) of the Data Protection Act 1998 by which personal and sensitive personal data may be lawfully shared.

Personal data shared must be proportionate, necessary but not excessive, and must be balanced with the consideration of privacy rights under the Human Rights Act. It must take into account any duty of confidentiality owed. A public interest in disclosure must outweigh an individual's right to privacy.

[Keeping Children Safe in Education: key changes in September guidance - Last updated 18 January 2021](#)

It is recognised that the handling of such confidential, sensitive and often raw information needs to be dealt with in a way that is proportionate and appropriate to the needs of the child or young person. To address this, 'Key Adults will be identified in each setting (a person with Child Protection training, usually the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy (DDSL) /Head Teacher). The Operation Encompass logs will then be stored within the child protection files.

The Key Adult will be the person available each day to receive the details of the incident and assess the type of support needed for the child. Merseyside Police will hold a database of all Key Adults in the Merseyside area. However, any role changes for the Key Adult must be shared with the Safeguarding Partnership Board by emailing: safeguardingunit@sthelens.gov.uk

Roles and Responsibilities Police

What will be disclosed?

Details collated with respect to the child or young person will include their name, age, date of birth, home address and school/nursery attended. The setting will be emailed the time/ date/location of the incident, the parties involved in the incident (including their relationship to the child), and the child's involvement in the incident.

How will it be disclosed and when?

This information will be disseminated from the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) or occasionally if the case requires, the Police Vulnerable Persons Unit (PVPU) to named Key Adults within the schools via an automated email system. A log will be kept by the MASH on an excel spreadsheet detailing log number/setting/Key Adult/date of referral.

Process

The process of an Operation Encompass notification begins with a system search of all the records of police callouts to domestic incidents to ascertain if a child or young person was present. By using the Vulnerable Person Referral Form (VPRF1) the child's school/nursery will be identified. This will lead to the settings Key Adult being identified from the database and the relevant information being shared to safeguard the child or young person (Appendix 2).

Incidents occurring on Friday, Saturday or Sunday will be reported to the school on Monday morning. There is currently no provision to report incidents occurring during the school holiday periods, as the aim of Operation Encompass is to provide support in the period immediately following the incident – This is presently being reviewed.

A disclosure will be made in respect of all children aged between 4-18 years.

The Police National Decision Making Model has been utilised for the setting up and development of Operation Encompass. This supports a review process for the Key Adults within the setting to monitor and manage interventions (Appendix 3).

5. Schools/Nursery's Responsibility

It is the settings responsibility to ensure the Police database of trained Key Adults is up to date. They must also ensure that there is a sufficiently trained Deputy to receive the information in their absence. A safeguarding email address is essential and any changes to the Key Adult database must be forwarded to the relevant MASH team as soon as practicable. Settings must also make certain that the Safeguarding inbox is monitored each morning and responded to immediately upon receiving the notification.

Each setting must ensure that all administration/office staff responsible for monitoring the email inbox know the importance of the notification and notify the Key Adult/Deputy straight away. If the Key Adult is not available, then the staff member must persistently try to pass the message on as soon as possible.

Once the Key adult has received the OE information, settings must record the information on an incident form, which must be retained and stored utilising the current process used to store child protection paperwork within the school/nursery (Appendix 5). Settings need to be aware that in the event of any domestic homicide or serious case review the documents may be required for disclosure purposes.

All state and independent schools/nurseries, academies and alternative education providers (AEP) will participate in Operation Encompass.

6. Cross Border Considerations

Where a child or young person is educated in a neighbouring borough, which is part of the Merseyside Police area, information will be shared across geographical boundaries. Incidents occurring in other force areas or children accommodated in settings outside the Merseyside area are not covered by this protocol.

Appendix 1

Operation Encompass Process

Attending Officer Actions

VPRF1 form to be completed at the scene of the domestic incident by attending Officers within the PVPU.

Details of all children who are present at the address of the incident will be entered on the VPRF1 form. Details are to include, **name, date of birth and school attended (If the child is of school/nursery age).**

All information regarding whether the child witnessed the incident is to be included in the free text section on the VPRF1 form.

VPRF1 form to be scanned onto computer and e-mailed to the local MASH Team. A hard copy is to be placed in an internal envelope and sent to the MASH Team. **These actions MUST be completed prior to the attending Officer going off duty.**

MASH & Settings' Actions

VPRF1 form to be received and reviewed by the MASH Admin staff.

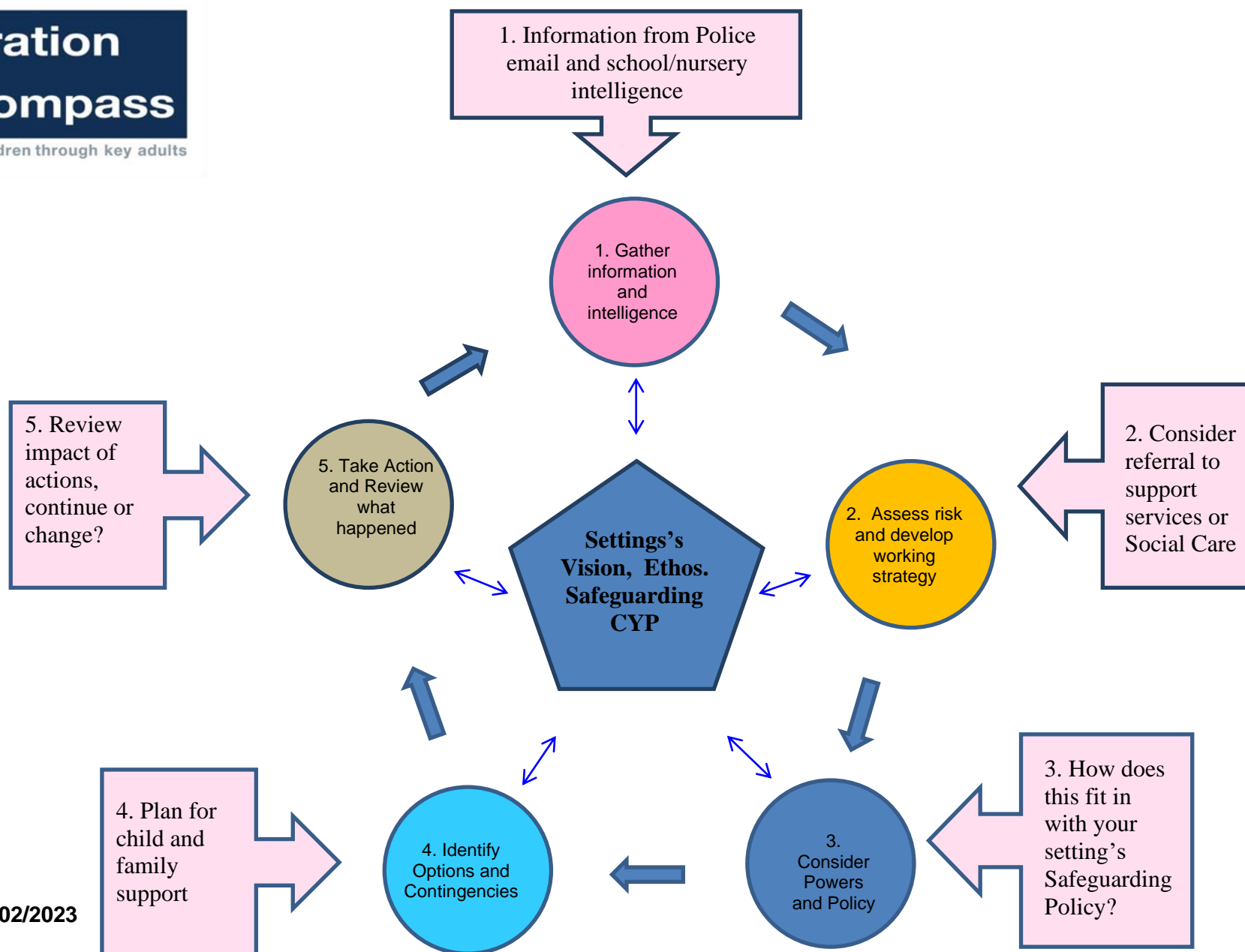
An email is sent to the relevant setting. Details of the children contained in the VPRF1 form are then passed to Key Adult /Deputy for dissemination.

Excel spreadsheet maintained by the MASH Team detailing log number, setting name, Key Adult to who disseminated and date of dissemination.

Key Adult to record all received information within the child's/children's child protection file.

Setting to provide overt/ silent support for the child/children for as long as needed; recording all actions of their support on the call log sheet.

Appendix 2



Operation Encompass

Supporting children through key adults

1. Information from Police email and setting intelligence

Who is the Key Adult(s) that will receive the notification?
If the Key Adult is not available before 09:00 who is the Deputy?

What is the safeguarding email address for the Key Adult? -
A mobile can be better because it shows any missed Encompass calls.

How will you record the information? (See Appendix 4)
Where is it kept?

Does the Key Adult have access to Child Protection records?

Key Adult Training: Preparing for the Encompass Notification Checklist

Operation Encompass aims to send your school/nursery an email before 9:00hrs on the first school morning after police have attended a domestic violence incident where children are present. The checklist and prompts allow the Key Adult(s) in each setting to prepare for the Encompass notification.

Check child protection records, check with class teacher for recent concerns. Brief Class teacher on Encompass call received and Key Adult's decision about type of support to provide.

Initial Support ideas: breakfast, uniform, meet and greet, silent support, homework, scripts, quiet space, peer support, helping children talk, what to say if they disclose. If there are any CP concerns, call Social Care EDT (before 09:00) or the Contact Centre (After 09.00).

2. Consider referral to support services or Social Care

Inform parents of school/nursery's participation in Operation Encompass (letter provided, see Appendix 5)

Include OE in setting's policies, website, training etc.:
Staff training, role in signposting and parent self-referral, Tell pupils of the school's involvement, website, newsletters, etc.

3. How does this fit in with your setting's Safeguarding Policy?

4. Plan for child and family support

Consider Early Help Assessment (EHAT).

File completed information sheet in CP records.

Following initial support consider setting based pastoral support, signposting to other agencies.

5. Review impact of actions, continue or change?

Setting's internal monitoring arrangements.

Check on child and update incident log.

Consultation with pupils and parent.

Be prepared to come across situations and contexts which you could not have planned for.

Appendix 4

Operation Encompass Key Adult Responsibilities Checklist

Responsibility	Achieved
The Key Adult must have attended the training and be part of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) with Child Protection responsibility.	
Responsibility The Key Adult must give up to date contact details to the Police within the St. Helens MASH Team.	
Responsibility The Operation Encompass file and record of notifications must be kept in the same way as other Child Protection paperwork, in a secure and locked cabinet/drawer.	
Responsibility The Key Adult can identify a person (trained in Child protection, preferably a Designated Child Protection Officer/Lead) who can deputise in their absence; but must have taken them through the Police National Decision Making Model and confidentiality aspects of Operation Encompass prior to them being able to respond to a notification. Once this has happened then the MASH Team should be informed of the identity of that Deputy. Locally the Safeguarding Partnership Board also invites all Deputies to attend training to equip them for this role.	
Responsibility The Key Adult must ensure that all teaching/non-teaching staff understands 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 given by other partners such as Social Care.	
Responsibility Office staff must be informed that when an Operation Encompass notification comes in then the Key Adult must be sought immediately.	
Responsibility The Key Adult must inform parents that the school/nursery is part of Operation Encompass, using the basic template letter included in this information pack, which can be amended to the school's individual requirements.	
Responsibility The Key Adult must inform the Governing Body that the setting is part of Operation Encompass and the Governor with responsibility for Safeguarding should have a working knowledge of the project.	
Responsibility The Key Adult should consider including information about Operation Encompass in the school/nursery's prospectus, thus ensuring that all new parents are informed of involvement. The Key Adult should consider whether the information about Operation Encompass should form part of the school/nursery website.	



DEVON & CORNWALL
CONSTABULARY

Key Adult Notification Record

Police Reference Number:		Date and Time of email:	
Child's name & DOB:			
Date and time of incident:			
Circumstances of incident :			
Additional setting information including other Operation Encompass notifications :			
Actions and impact:			

Appendix 6



Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to inform you of our involvement in a long term Merseyside project that runs jointly between local St. Helens schools/nurseries and Merseyside Police, known as 'Operation Encompass'.

'Operation Encompass' is the reporting to schools/nurseries, prior to the start of the next school day, notifying them of when a child or young person has been exposed to, or involved in, any domestic incident.

'Operation Encompass' Police work with a trained member of the school/nursery staff, known as a Key Adult, sharing important information in order to help us to support affected children in our care. It is then the school/nursery's responsibility to offer support and make provision for any possible difficulties experienced by children, or their families, following a domestic incident within the home.

We are keen to offer the best support possible to all our pupils and we know that this project has been extremely beneficial for all those involved over the last few years hence our reason to continue to be part of this project.

If you have any questions about our involvement with this project please do not hesitate to contact the school/nursery office.

Signed

Head Teacher/Nursery Manager

Appendix 7

Signatories to the Joint-Agency Operation Encompass Protocol

The five neighbouring Boroughs have all signed to operate Operation Encompass within their areas. This helps to protect children when families move from one borough to another within the Merseyside area.

Liverpool Local Safeguarding Children's Board
Wirral Local Safeguarding Children's Board
St Helens Local Safeguarding Children's Board
Knowsley Local Safeguarding Children's Board
Sefton Local Safeguarding Children's Board