

Luton



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Introduction

This guidance covers information regarding the Luton Children, Families and Education Directorate 'Need to Know' and National Alerts Notify system and outlines situations when a 'Need to Know' Notification should be completed. This information should be read in conjunction with the Ofsted Notification guidance – see [Notifications](#). In certain serious situations the Luton 'Need to Know' Notification may form the basis of an Ofsted Notification.

The Luton 'Need to Know' Form and Notification System is the method used to alert managers and senior managers to any situation regarding individual children/young people and/or group incidents that may pose a risk to children looked after and care leavers and where managers need to be apprised of the circumstances of the situation and the broader context. This Notification system should also be used to alert managers and senior managers to any broader risks to Children, Families & Education and its staff/carers. Additionally this system should be used in certain circumstances where an allegation has been made about an adult in a position of trust with children. In such cases the Need to Know would normally be completed by the LADO. The 'Need to Know' Notification should be used to alert managers to any situation that may pose a specific risk which may require a strategic response including an Elected Member briefing, a co-ordinated response and/or the completion of an Ofsted Notification.

The Service manager will decide whether the circumstance requires a 'Need to Know' Notification. The Team Manager should consult with their Service Manager prior to initiating the 'Need to Know' Notification process.

If the Social Worker, Leaving Care Personal Adviser, Residential/Fostering Officer or Manager, is unsure whether a 'Need to Know' Notification should be completed, s/he should discuss the matter with his/her Line Manager.

What circumstances might a 'Need to Know' Notification apply to?

A 'Need to Know' Notification may apply to:

- All children and young people who come to the attention of and/or receive services from Luton Children, Families and Education Service (and children/young people placed in Luton by other Local Authorities);
- Staff and carers;
- Members of the community who pose a risk to children/young people;
- Children and young people who may have experienced significant harm, or be at risk of significant harm from an adult in a position of trust. Service premises, schools and commissioned/partner agency premises;
- Significant legal proceedings.

Circumstances (Not Exclusive) which Require a 'Need To Know' Notification

For Children Looked After/Care Leavers:

- Where a child looked after or care leaver dies;
- A child looked after or care leaver has any serious injury or accident;
- A child looked after or care leaver is missing for more than 24 hours, and continues to go missing for significant periods of time when they have returned (i.e. over 24 hours and repeating patterns);
- Where it is identified that a child looked after or care leaver is subject to, or potentially subject to significant risks;
- Where a child looked after or care leaver alleges an adult in a position of trust has significantly harmed them or a child in their care or poses a risk of significant harm;
- Where a child looked after or care leaver is arrested or convicted for serious criminal offences against a person;
- Where it is identified that a child looked after or care leaver is involved in violent incident/s in the community, or on Luton Council premises, or where a member of staff, employed or commissioned, by the Children, Families & Education Service is present;
- Where there are serious implications for staff (employed or commissioned by Luton Borough Council) working with a specific child looked after or care leaver, or group of children/young people;
- Where a child looked after or care leaver is subject of an investigation in respect of sexual exploitation;
- Where a child looked after or care leaver requires admission to a mental health resource due to specific incidents;
- Where a child looked after or care leaver is remanded into custody and/or receives a custodial sentence;
- Where a child looked after or care leaver attempts suicide or undertakes serious self-harming episodes;
- Where a child looked after or care leaver has a serious or communicable diseases in a school, residential premises or foster care placement;
- Closure and/or an incident occurs at a residential home that has placements of a Luton children/young people, in particularly if the closure is unexpected or urgent.

For Staff/Foster Carers/Adopted Parents/SGO Carer/Commissioned Services – Children Looked After and Care Leavers

- Where the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is contacted and following consideration of the issue, recommends the completion of a 'Need to Know' Notification;
- Where a member of staff has a significant accident or injuries at work. This is in addition to the standard Health and Safety procedures which must be followed for all accidents;
- Where a Foster Carer has a significant accident or injury. This is in addition to the standard Health and Safety procedures that must be followed for all accidents;
- Where a member of staff or Foster Carer is subject of a violent incident/s and, or significant threats of violence;

- Where a member of staff or Foster Carer is the subject of significant disciplinary matters;
- Where a member of staff or Foster Carer has an unexpected/unexplained death or serious injury;
- Where a member of staff or Foster Carer is subject of allegations of, arrest or conviction for serious criminal offences.

Children who are subject to CIN and CP

- Children on Child Protection Register who are Missing from Home
- Death or serious injury of a child on the Child Protection Register
- Death or serious injury in unusual circumstances of any child
- Unborn Children where the whereabouts of parents is unknown
- Children involved in risky behaviours

Allegations or concerns about adults in a position of trust with children

- Where it is alleged and adult in a position of trust with children has significantly harmed a child in their care or poses a risk of significant harm.
- All allegations/ concerns involving staff employed within the Children, Families and Education Directorate.
- Allegations where there is a risk of wider community or media knowledge or interest.

Financial and Complaints – Relating to Children Looked After and Care Leavers

- Incidents where potentially high financial or policy implications occur e.g. Applications for judicial review, when leave has been granted
- Police investigations into suspected fraud or corruption involving employees or contractors
- Significant complaints about our service or those that we commission
- Significant complaints, issues likely to be raised by children looked after, care leavers and/or their family members and/or members of the public with elected members

Media – Relating to Children Looked After and Care Leaver

- Any media coverage relating to a child subject to a service from the Luton Children, Families & Education Directorate including publicity relating to missing persons, child sexual exploitation or risk
- Any media coverage relating to a child subject to a service from the Luton Children, Families & Education Directorate, including publicity relating to missing persons
- Any media coverage or potential coverage where there may be an impact on the Council
- Matters of public debate or anxiety
- Matters likely to attract local or national media interest

- Any matter which has, or is likely, to attract the attention of the media, Members of the Council or Members of Parliament.

Premises - Relating to Children Looked After and Care Leavers

- Are subject of serious or significant damage resulting from flood, accidental fire etc
- Are subject of significant vandalism or burglary
- Are subject of any incidence of arson

Legal Proceedings, Relating to Children Looked After and Care Leavers

- Likely to excite public and /or media interest
- Inquests where the Council has an involvement or could be criticised
- Litigation between the Council, other Local Authorities, or public bodies on which the Council is represented or with whom it has a close relationship
- Sensitive cases, e.g. proceedings concerning the death of a client, prosecutions or breaches of regulations in relation to registered homes, closure of a registered home, litigation concerning residents in a children's home
- Prosecutions by or against the Council.

Need to Know Notification Form Completion

The 'Need to Know' Notification is not intended to be a full report. It alerts the relevant Senior Managers to an incident and provides the information needed to form an initial opinion on what, if any, action is required by the relevant service and a fuller report will be requested, if required, at a later date.

Recording of 'Need to Know' Notification

The Team & Service managers will ensure records of the incident, any resulting management emails or instructions, and subsequent developments are on the child's electronic record. The 'Need to Know' Notification and any updated 'Need to Know' Notifications will be placed on the child's electronic record. Records involving adults in a position of trust will be recorded on the allegations management database.

Circulation of 'Need to Know' Notification

The Team manager will arrange completion of the 'Need to Know' Notification Form. The Service manager will forward the completed notification to the Service Director Operations, Statutory Social Work and Early Help & Prevention Services (they will determine if the DCS is informed) and the 'Need to Know' Inbox LBCLutonNeedtoKnow@luton.gov.uk. The Service Manager will advise the 'on call' Service Manager of the notification.

All 'Need to Know' Notifications will be reviewed weekly at the Children, Families & Education DMT meeting

In some circumstances the name of an adult subject to an allegation will be restricted and only an anonymised version of the notification shared with Service Directors and DMT.

Consideration will be given to the broader circulation of the 'Need to Know' Notification by the relevant Service Director.

Any of the recipients may circulate more widely on a 'Need to Know' basis only. The relevant Service Director will circulate to the Luton Children's Safeguarding Board as they consider appropriate. The LADO should be consulted prior to wider circulation of notifications involving adults in a position of trust.

Updating of the 'Need to Know' Notification

The Team manager may need to update the 'Need to Know' Notification very quickly after the initial brief, if the situation changes, and as necessary thereafter. Updates will be concise and draw attention only to significant or newly discovered facts or developments.

At a later stage, the Service manager may be asked to provide a fuller analysis of the severity and impact of the incident including recommendations about future practice, including the lessons to be learnt from the incident.

In respect of Missing Children, a weekly updated 'Need to Know' Notification is required.

Management of 'Need to Know' Notification

The Administrative support role to the Service Director, Operations, Statutory social work and Early Help & Prevention will monitor all 'Need to Know' Notifications to ensure:

- Regular and appropriate updates are received;
- That the situation has been resolved satisfactorily.

The Director of Children's Services, Service Director, or any manager in receipt of the 'Need to Know' Notification will email any actions they require to the relevant Service/Team manager. The Service/Team manager will ensure the email is placed on the child's electronic case record.

The Service manager will ensure their 'update' section (page 2) of the 'Need to Know' Notification is finalised when a situation has been resolved. S/he will describe why the matter is considered resolved (e.g. missing child has returned) and any learning points, which can be picked up within the wider organisation. S/he will send to LBCLutonNeedtoKnow@luton.gov.uk as well as the relevant Service Director.

The Service Director (Operations, Statutory Social Work, Early Help & Prevention) will determine the need for a formal debriefing meeting, so that learning points can be identified following a serious incident.

If child death occurs then it is the role of the Head of Service for Strategic Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement for to inform the LSCB for consideration of a CSPR.

Issuing National Child Protection Alerts

Basic Principles

- National Alerts are issued on children (including unborn babies) who are subject to a Child Protection Plan or are the subjects of formal inter-agency Child Protection Plans and who go missing from their Local Authority area;
- Each National Alert notification should be subject to the simple threshold test outlined below (see notification threshold below);
- The National Alerts notification system is from Child Protection Custodian to Child Protection Custodian (or Designated Officer). It should not simply be an administrative task;
- When issuing a National Alert it is essential for an alert to have been raised through the Service Manager to the Head of Service for Strategic Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement as detailed below.
- Missing Children in Care - The national child protection alerts system should **NOT** be used as a missing person's alerts process for vulnerable adults, unaccompanied asylum seekers or Children in Care who go missing. In exceptional circumstances, notifications of missing Children in Care can be issued, subject to the test below.

The Process to Follow to Issue a National Alert

1. Social workers must complete the Notification of Missing Luton Child Subject to a Child Protection Plan template (see Appendix 3). This template should include sufficient written information to enable the individual case threshold decision to be made and to issue an Other Local Authority (OLA) alert notification;
2. Once complete, the Notification should be sent through to the Service Manager in the relevant area, who will quality assure the document to make sure that the correct information is included;
3. Once the Service Manager has checked the notification they must send to the Head of Service for Strategic Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement for approval;
4. Head of Service for Strategic Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement will be responsible for signing off the National Alert and forwarding this through to Management Information so that it can be cascaded across the national Custodian/Designated officer list.
5. Head of Service for Strategic Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement will forward all National Alerts to the Family Safeguarding Service Manager.

The Process to Follow to End a National Alert

1. When children are located, a national "found" notification should follow. If the children are not located, a new notification should be issued at 6 monthly intervals, giving the date that the child/children originally went missing. The Service Manager in the area the children originate from should ensure that this process is completed;

2. If 12 months elapses and an alert is still current, but no follow up notification has been received, the Other Local Authority Lead Officers for Child Protection will delete the alert from their systems.

Notification Thresholds

1. **Are the family really missing?**

If they are known to be in a particular locality, but their address is not known, this does not constitute a national alert;

2. **How do you know that the child/family is missing, and for how long?**

Social Workers should exclude the possibility that the family are temporarily absent/missing from their address. Are they staying with family/friends or away on holiday? Do friends/neighbours/family believe that they are "missing"? Is a parent in custody? If they have not been seen for several days, the threshold has not yet been met. Do the police have any information? Has the social worker contacted all local key agencies to check if anyone knows where the family are? Until the social worker can verify that they have made reasonable attempts to locate them, and at least three weeks have elapsed, the family should not be the subject of the national alerts notification system.

Exceptional Alerts

N.B. The notification thresholds given above must first be satisfied.

1. Children who have disappeared immediately before, during or immediately following a Section 47 investigation of serious allegations of significant harm where the Designated Officer considers that there is evidence of sufficient danger to justify a national alert notification;
2. Children on a Care Order who are deemed to be in danger because they have been abducted by a parent/individual who poses a significant risk of harm to the child and whose whereabouts are not known;
3. Children accommodated following significant child protection concerns who are deemed to be in danger because they have been removed without notice by a parent/individual who poses a significant risk of harm to the child and whose whereabouts are not known.