

Derby and Derbyshire Education Providers Stopping Domestic Abuse Together (SDAT) Guidance

November 2023

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To be read in conjunction with the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Procedures				
Version	Author/s	Signed off by	Date	Review Date
1.	Multi-agency Task and Finish group	DDSCP Policies & Procedures Group	May 2022	May 2024
2.	Updated by DDSCP VYP Officer in partnership with Derbyshire Constabulary, DDSCP Education subgroups, Derby City Council and Derbyshire County Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Links to multi-agency safeguarding children procedures updated Oct 2024 	DDSCP Policies & Procedures Group	Nov 2023	Nov 2025

Derby and Derbyshire Education Providers Stopping Domestic Abuse Together (SDAT) Guidance

1. Introduction

Domestic Abuse notifications to schools, also known as Stopping Domestic Abuse Together (SDAT), is the local Derby and Derbyshire version of a national initiative called [Operation Encompass](#). It follows the same principles as Operation Encompass; however, it is implemented differently.

Derbyshire Constabulary lead on Stopping Domestic Abuse Together (SDAT) which was rolled out to all schools in Derby and Derbyshire in 2018.

This guidance must be read in conjunction with the [Derby and Derbyshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Children](#) procedures. Children includes everyone under the age of 18.

2. What are Domestic Abuse Notifications (SDAT)?

Domestic abuse notifications are sent from Derbyshire Constabulary to schools in Derby and Derbyshire. They are an early notification system to schools to quickly notify them of any incidents of domestic abuse where the police have attended a household where statutory school aged children live.

The notifications are designed to:

- Provide a link between a statutory school aged child's lived home experience and their experience in school when domestic abuse is a current issue
- Help ensure that schools can effectively support and respond to children's needs in the education setting
- Promote effective communications between police, local authority children's services and schools where there has been a domestic abuse incident

3. Role of the police

When the police are called out to a domestic abuse incident or are informed of an incident at a later date, the Police Officer will complete a Public Protection Notice (PPN) or a Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour Based Violence (DASH) risk identification checklist, gathering information about the incident and its seriousness. They will also check if there are children living in or associated with the household and if they are statutory school age, which school they attend. If a child is present within the household, the Police Officer will briefly assess the impact on the child at the time of the incident; this will be included in any information passed onto local authority children's services.

If immediate safeguarding concerns are identified by the police, then action will be taken to protect the child. Local authority children's services will be informed as a matter of urgency to work together jointly to decide what action is needed.

If there is any difficulty identifying the school or the parent/carers refuse to confirm the school, this will be alerted to the Police Safeguarding Co-ordination Hub (SCH) who will check with local authority children's services.

Completion of the PPN/DASH will automatically trigger a domestic abuse notification to the child's school where details have successfully been obtained. If siblings attend different schools, each school will receive the notification.

Local authority children's services and health may also receive information from the police based on the completed PPN/DASH.

4. Police notifications to schools

All education providers (including maintained schools, academies, independent schools and colleges) will receive domestic abuse notifications via their designated secure safeguarding email address, which is accessible by a minimum of two safeguarding staff.

Notifications are on statutory school aged children only, therefore early years settings and maintained nurseries are unlikely to receive them.

The school will be told that a domestic abuse incident has occurred – no detail will be provided about the risk level of the incident. The information will include:

- The date and time of the incident
- The location of the incident
- The child's name and date of birth
- The alleged perpetrator of the incident
- The alleged victim of the incident
- If a welfare check on the child was made; this means that the child was seen by the police. If a welfare check was not made this means the child wasn't seen by the police.

The risk level of the incident isn't shared as this is sensitive information which relates to the adults (including 16 and 17 year olds) who were involved. Abuse towards parents/carers by children under the age of 16 are not notified to schools using the domestic abuse notification system. They are referred directly to local authority children's services, who will then liaise with the child's school as appropriate.

On occasion, Derbyshire Constabulary may send a school a domestic abuse notification based on information received from another police force area.

5. Police notifications to local authority children's services

The police triage all domestic abuse incidents and where there is a concern about a child, the PPN/DASH form is sent to local authority children's services.

If there are concerns about a risk of serious harm, local authority children's services will co-ordinate a strategy meeting involving all relevant agencies, including schools, to discuss next steps. See [Child Protection Section 47 Enquiries](#) procedure for information on strategy discussions and meetings.

All cases that are open to localities are notified of the incident as soon as they are received and passed to the principal allocated worker.

Unknown and closed cases are screened by Senior Practitioner/Social Worker led processes using the [DDSCP Threshold document](#), to agree thresholds, co-ordinate interventions and information sharing.

6. The role of the school

The school should ensure they have a designated secure safeguarding email address to receive domestic abuse notifications. This email address should only be accessible by staff who have responsibilities for safeguarding such as the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), deputy DSL and other specific safeguarding staff. The inbox should be regularly monitored by staff responsible for safeguarding; this should be done by more than one individual and checked daily during the school term and in school hours. The school safeguarding email address must also be encrypted using transport layer security (TLS); you can find out more about TLS on the Government Digital Service, [Transport Layer Security \(TLS\) Guidance](#) webpage.

Notifications will continue to be sent to schools throughout school holidays and at weekends, so that school staff can be made aware of any incidents and have that in mind when they support the child on their return to school. Some schools may be able to respond and provide support out of school hours and during school holidays. To support partnership communications an 'out of office' message should be operational during other times and in school holidays to advise partner agencies if and how often messages will be checked/responded to, and when the school will reopen.

When a notification is received, school safeguarding staff should initially respond as they do in any situation where concerns are raised about a child. They should consider:

- What is already known about the child and their family?
- What is known about the child when they arrived (or not) at school today?
- Who in the school needs to be informed? Only those staff who have a specific need to know about the incident will need to be told i.e., class/form teacher and relevant support staff.

Steps should be taken to observe the child's well-being and how they are today. This should be done by the most appropriate member of school staff who knows the child, for example the class/form teacher, learning mentor, teaching assistant or a member of the safeguarding team.

In all cases the child (and their parent/carer) should not be directly approached and asked about the incident, instead general observation, and enquiries about how they are should be made.

Discretion and sensitivity should be used at all times when the school is notified that an incident has occurred. School staff should be mindful that it is likely that children may have seen or heard the abusive episode, be used, or even involved in the abuse. Other children may not be aware that the incident has taken place, particularly those who weren't in the household at the time the incident took place. It is probable that most children, whether they were in the household at the time of the incident or not, will have sensed the tension in the build-up to the abuse and experienced the aftermath in some form. Even when the parents believe the children were unaware of what was happening, children can often give detailed accounts of the events.

In all cases, the school is expected to assess the presentation of the child and what is known about their family and home life. Things to consider:

- How are they presenting physically and emotionally?
- Are there any changes in their behaviour?
- What is the possible impact on siblings/other children?

There may be times when the child may initiate a conversation, this should be encouraged, and the child supported to share their experiences which can inform school and partner agencies decision making.

If the child is not in school on the day of the notification, the DSL, and anyone else responsible for receiving the notification, should assess what they know about the child at school and the explanation for why the child is not in on that day. Schools should follow their attendance policies to agree any school-based actions and decide whether the absence raises concern that should be discussed with local authority children's services. The [DDSCP Threshold document](#) can help all schools make a judgement about the child's level of needs, risks and the help required.

The [DVRIM](#) (Domestic Violence Risk Identification Matrix)¹ can help schools reflect on what they know and what they do not know and make a judgement about risk to the child.

In all cases, the school should consider what support they could offer the child according to their individual needs. This could include ensuring their basic needs have been met (are they tired or hungry?) and considering if they are able to engage in learning or if they would benefit from positive play, nurture, or time out of the classroom.

Some children may benefit from an early help assessment to address any emerging needs and co-ordinate support from a range of early help services. This will make sure that an in-depth understanding of the child and their family's needs and strengths are understood at the earliest opportunity. It also increases the likelihood that the most effective decisions are made to improve the situation for the child and their family. See [Providing Early Help](#) procedure.

If a school becomes concerned about what the child tells them and/or have any concerns that emerge from their assessment of a child, they should use the [DDSCP Threshold Document](#) to support their decision making about the child's level of needs, risks and the help required and if felt necessary, make a referral to local authority children's services. See [Making a Referral to Social Care](#) procedure and [Domestic Abuse](#) procedure.

Where a school is unclear about the action they should take and wish to speak to a Social Worker they should contact:

- In Derbyshire - Starting Point Consultation and Advice Service for Professionals 01629 535353. The service operates Monday to Friday from 10am to 4pm
- In Derby City - Children's Services Professional Consultation Line 07812 300329. The service operates Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm

¹ Please note this tool is currently under review by partner agencies.

When a child is already open to local authority children’s services and a domestic abuse notification has been received by the school, the school and the Early Help Worker or Social Worker need to make contact as soon as possible. Both should keep in regular contact.

7. Recording

The DSL or their deputy will need to record that the notification has been received in the child’s individual child protection / safeguarding file and chronology. Records should also include:

- Details of how the concern was followed up and resolved; and
- A note of any actions taken, decisions reached and the outcome, as well as a review of any progress made.

8. Developing a whole school approach to domestic abuse notifications

Schools are encouraged to communicate their commitment to “Stopping domestic abuse together” on their website and through their usual communications to parents and carers. They should explain that if they receive a notification, they will routinely monitor the child’s welfare and engage with partner agencies where required. This forms part of the school commitment to safeguarding all children.

The school information sharing and privacy notice should incorporate SDAT.

Schools should also consider how they will ensure that learners in their setting are aware of domestic abuse notifications to schools. Young people told the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership that:

- Most hadn’t heard about domestic abuse notifications (SDAT)
- When they had, they thought it only addressed serious cases and some thought all teachers were told and this would be very embarrassing
- They wanted more information about SDAT, especially that:
 - Notifications were on all incidents of domestic abuse, and they didn’t include details of incidents, just that something had happened
 - Only safeguarding school staff received notifications
 - Children wouldn’t automatically be taken away from their family
 - The aim was to support and help children
 - Children weren’t to blame

It is also vital that all school staff should have an awareness of domestic abuse, it’s impact on children and young people and school domestic abuse notifications (SDAT), including the dedicated school safeguarding email address.

9. Further Information and Resources

Up to date information about the range of local domestic abuse services available is located on:

- Safer Derbyshire [domestic abuse](#) webpage, there is also a [Derbyshire Domestic Abuse Service Directory](#)

- Derby [city life links](#)
- Derby city council [domestic abuse](#) webpages
- Derbyshire constabulary - [information and advice about domestic abuse](#) and [SDAT](#) webpages
- [Safer Derby City](#) - for information, advice and support for young people and parents who live, visit or go to school in Derby City

Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership ([DDSCP](#)) - Key supports to be aware of:

- Policy, procedures and guidance - [Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Procedures](#) to be used by all agencies whenever there are concerns about a child. Relevant procedures relating to domestic abuse are:
 - [Providing Early Help](#)
 - [Making a Referral to Social Care](#)
 - [Domestic Abuse](#)
- The procedures contain a [document library](#) with key protocols, guidance, assessment tools and briefing notes including:
 - Derby City and Derbyshire [Threshold Document](#)
 - Multi Agency [Dispute Resolution and Escalation Policy and template](#)
 - [Information Sharing Guidance for Practitioners](#)
 - [Assessment tools](#) – early help, DASH risk identification checklist, Domestic Violence Risk Identification Matrix (DVRIM), Graded Care Profile for neglect
 - DDSCP Briefing Note: [Updates to Domestic Abuse \(SDAT\) Notifications to Schools](#)
 - Briefing Learning from Audit - [Domestic Abuse](#)
- Learning and Development – the DDSCP offers a range of multi-agency safeguarding training opportunities which includes Safeguarding Children and Domestic Abuse (level 3) multi-agency training. See DDSCP [training](#) page.

National

- [Women’s Aid](#) – also has [The Hideout](#)² a space for children and young people to help them understand domestic abuse, and how to take positive action if it's happening to you.
- [Refuge](#) – including the **national free 24 hour domestic abuse helpline: 0808 2000 247** or visit www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk (access live chat Mon-Fri 3-10pm). A BSL interpreter service is available Monday to Friday, 10am to 6pm. Refuge also facilitate a bespoke website about ‘[tech safety](#)’, this is when someone uses technology to harm or control someone.

² Note: Women’s Aid are reviewing the content of The Hideout

- [Respect Men's Advice Line](#) - confidential help and support for men experiencing domestic violence from a partner, ex-partner or from other family members. Freephone 0808 801 0327
- [Safe Lives](#) - UK wide charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse
- Statutory guidance [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)
- NSPCC – [protecting children from domestic abuse](#)
- [Galop](#) – LGBT+ anti-violence charity. Includes **National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans+ Domestic Abuse Helpline 0800 999 5428**. Provides emotional and practical support for LGBT+ people experiencing domestic abuse.
- [Domestic abuse: how to get help guidance](#)
- [Operation Encompass](#) – resources for schools which includes free advice from an Education Psychologist about how best to support children, call the OE Teachers' National Helpline on 0204 513 9990. Monday to Friday, 8am-1pm

Appendices A. Common domestic abuse notification issues and questions

- **The school has received a notification, however the child is not known to the school**

The notification will include details/a link about how to report that the notification has been received in error. It is important that schools act quickly to report the error to ensure that the child's school can be informed. Once this has been reported the information must be deleted.

- **The school safeguarding email address has changed**

The school should inform:

- Derbyshire Constabulary via schchildrenenquiries@derbyshire.police.uk
- The Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership via ddscp@derby.gov.uk
- Any other relevant partner agencies

- **The school domestic abuse notification appears to have been delayed and was received by the school sometime after the incident itself**

Delays in notification can be caused by several reasons:

- i. The initial notification going to another school. It is important that when a school receives a notification in error, they quickly address this so that the child's school can be informed.
- ii. The occurrence date in the notification relates to when the domestic abuse first started. If this is not a recent date, it may be that this is a recent report to police of historical abuse or may indicate the start of a pattern of abusive behaviour in the relationship which is continuing now.
- iii. It may have been unclear which school the child attends as the parents/carers have not provided the information or the police may not have identified that a statutory school age child lives in the household.

- **The school are aware of a domestic abuse incident however a notification hasn't been received**

The school should first check that their safeguarding email is working correctly and if the email address has changed that partners have been notified. They should then liaise with the police by emailing schchildrenenquiries@derbyshire.police.uk

- **When the school receives a domestic abuse notification, is it safe for the child to go home?**

This is a multi-agency decision and is managed by the police and local authority children's services, who will liaise with the school as needed. If a child is at risk action will be taken by the police and children's services, however if the school has additional information in relation to the child's immediate safety they should liaise with children's services as a matter of urgency.

- **The school has been contacted by local authority children's services and asked to progress an early help assessment. What information and support will the school receive to help them take the assessment forward? What happens if the family refuse an early help assessment?**

In Derbyshire, Starting Point would initially speak to the parents/carers to advise that the school had been asked to progress an early help assessment. Schools can request support from the [Family Help Service](#).

In Derby, whilst completing an Early Help Assessment (EHA) schools can ask for support from an [Early Help Advisor](#). Social Care will provide the school with enough information about the domestic abuse incident and other relevant issues, to assist them in completing an EHA. On some occasions Social Care will also speak with the parents/carers to gain consent for the completion of an EHA. If the family refuse an early help assessment, the school can notify local authority children's services via the [online portal](#) or via [Education Welfare](#). Schools can also seek the support of an [Early Help Advisor](#).

- **What happens if a child is educated at home or not on a school roll?**

The Police Officer will ensure that their Safeguarding Co-ordination Hub are alerted, they will then notify local authority children's social care.

Appendices B. Domestic Abuse Notifications Flowchart

