

# **CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES**

**LONDON BOROUGHS OF SUTTON, MERTON, RICHMOND AND  
ROYAL BOROUGH OF KINGSTON UPON THAMES**

## CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES

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### INTRODUCTION

The Children's Emergency Duty Team (CEDT) is managed by the London Borough of Sutton on behalf of the London Boroughs of Sutton, Merton, Richmond and the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. The arrangement between the 4 boroughs began in July 2006. The 4 authorities share the cost of running the service. Half of the cost is divided equally and the remaining half is divided by borough depending upon the number of referrals taken in each preceding 3 months.

CEDT is a service responding to all referrals and contacts for children's social work services which arise out of normal working hours. The duty social worker will assess what, if any, action is required before the next working day. CEDT also offer emergency assessments and provide accommodations on behalf of the 4 boroughs housing departments.

CEDT Aims to:

- Provide a thorough assessment of referrals with resultant prompt action where indicated.
- Take any immediate action required to ensure the safety of children
- Give appropriate advice to members of the public and professionals from other agencies
- Have effective communication with day staff.

These procedures only apply to CEDT social workers on duty. They should be read in conjunction with:

- Pan-London Child Protection Procedures
- Working Together
- Children & Families procedures for the four boroughs

### HOURS

The Service operates during the following hours:

Mon	17:00 - 23:00 and 20:00-09:00
Tue	17:00 - 23:00 and 20:00-09:00
Wed	17:00 - 23:00 and 20:00-09:00
Thurs	17:00 - 23:00 and 20:00-09:00
Fri	17:00 - 23:00 and 20:00-09:00
Sat	08:00-21:00 10:00-17:00, 20:00-09:00
Sun	08:00-21:00 and 20:00-09:00
Bank Holidays	08:00-21:00 and 20:00-09:00

### CONTACTING CEDT

Calls to the team are taken by a member of the call centre from 5pm – 8pm. Then calls go to a member of the security team both based at Sutton Civic Centre for Sutton, Merton and Kingston and by Careline for Richmond only. They provide cover for all non-office hours and pass all Social Services and Homeless Persons calls to the CEDT Social Worker.

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At the time of taking the referral the contact person will request:

- Name of the referrer and contact details
- Name of the child
- Date of birth of the child if known
- Address of the child
- A brief summary of the issue in order to establish urgency.

If the referrer does not wish to disclose any of the above, the contact person will take the contact number only.

The contact person will then telephone the social worker on shift and pass on the above information.

The target for returning calls to referrers is ten minutes. If they are currently engaged in work, they may request that the contact person calls back to the referrer and explains that there may be a short delay in responding.

### **CEDT UN-OPERATIONAL**

If the social worker on duty is unable to continue with their shift, for example through illness, they will inform Civic Security and Careline. Civic Security will contact the Executive Head of Service for Sutton and on-call managers. Civic Security will attempt to contact other social workers in the team to see whether cover can be arranged.

### **TEAM INFORMATION**

The team comprises 4.5 permanent qualified social workers, and a 'back-up' team of 6 sessional qualified social workers. Between them they cover the rota, annual leave, sickness absence and vacancies. There are additional hours which are used for team meetings, supervision and training. All social workers joining the team must have a minimum of 4 years' post qualifying experience and recent experience of child protection work.

The rota is a 5 weekly repeating sequence with most permanent social workers working a fixed pattern. Cover is arranged so that two social workers are on duty during anticipated peak times i.e. in the evenings and during the day on a Saturday. Permanent and sessional staff cover sickness absences.

### **SUPPORT FROM AUTHORITIES**

Each Local Authority will provide the CEDT Social Worker Manager with written information on policies and procedures which must be followed and details of local resources. Each Local Authority shall ensure that this information is kept up to date and properly maintained

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CEDT Social Workers are able to give advice to the public about such resources.

Each Local Authority will provide details of a manager on call. CEDT social workers will call the manager for advice and support in the event of:

- A request for the accommodation of a child
- A child protection investigation
- Any serious incident that would require the director of Children's Services to be informed
- Press interest

Each local authority will provide information regarding available placements for children in the event of an emergency accommodation being required.

Each local authority should also provide a contact number for legal advice.

Each Borough appoints a liaison officer. The liaison officers are responsible for liaising with the CEDT Social Worker Manager in all matters relating to the Service which affect the Local Authority of the Liaison Officer. These matters may include complaints, procedural and/or policy changes, the level and cost of the Service and the provision of additional staff and resources.'

Representatives from the four Authorities will meet on a quarterly basis. Decisions regarding the operation of the service will be made at this meeting.

### ALERTS

Alerts should be used when there is a basis to believe that a case will come to the attention of CEDT. Alerts should be used to give a clear indication of what concerns and risks there are and to give clear instructions on any action that should or should not be taken.

All alerts and emails to Children's Emergency Duty Team should be sent to [childrensedt@sutton.gov.uk.cjism.net](mailto:childrensedt@sutton.gov.uk.cjism.net) **AT ALL TIMES**.

All emails to [childrensedt@sutton.gov.uk.cjism.net](mailto:childrensedt@sutton.gov.uk.cjism.net) will automatically forward to all the CEDT Social Workers, the Team Administrator and Team Manager.

- **What do I include in an alert?**
  1. The **last Referral and Information Record** must be sent either by email or fax. This should be as complete and up to date as possible. This gives all the basic information. Also attach a care plan or child protection plan if this is available. **A separate Referral and Information Record should be sent for each child.**
  2. A current **Risk Assessment** of risks to the service user, other children, adults and workers. It is essential to warn CEDT Social Workers about any situations where there may be a risk to the worker, or to any child or adult.
  3. **Reasons why you are referring now.**

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4. Suggested **Course of Action and/or action to avoid**; including pre-arranged standby options (e.g. relatives' details, foster carers or a residential placement).

CEDT will not be able to undertake planned welfare visits. Alerts should not request this. If there is reason to believe that a child is at direct risk or this is likely to happen at a specific time, then the referring social worker should contact the Team during operational hours and discuss this need.

### COMMUNICATION OF REFERRALS

All referrals must be recorded and emailed to the [childrensdayservice@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:childrensdayservice@sutton.gov.uk) before 9am the next working day.

The CEDT admin will circulate referrals to the respective authorities as soon as possible on the next working day. This should be completed by 1000.

If there is any need to discuss the content of a referral or to clarify details, the receiving social worker or housing officer should contact the CEDT admin officer on 0208 770 4322. If necessary, the admin officer will make contact with the social worker who was on duty. It is possible that there may be a delay in contacting them as they are not available.

### SERVICE CRITERIA

All referrals to CEDT will receive a response from the duty social worker.

The duty social worker will take details of the presenting issue.

All referrals will be communicated to the respective borough on the next working day, irrespective of whether the referral would meet the eligibility criteria for services during the day.

On receiving the referral, the duty social worker will make an assessment as to what action would be appropriate.

Such action may be:

- Further intervention, investigation or assessment as required to ensure that a child is safe and secure until the next working day. Such intervention will be governed by the same legislation as governs local authority social service and housing functions during normal working hours.
- Referral to another agency
- Providing information
- Recording relevant information

Referrals are accepted regarding children within the boundaries of the four authorities at the time of referral. For example, if they are in a hospital or Police Station within the four boroughs.

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Referrals will also be accepted regarding children who are looked after by any of the four boroughs regardless of where they are living.

Referrals regarding children normally resident in the four boroughs but who are currently in another area will be the responsibility of the service in that area until CEDT have agreed to accept the case, as set out in the London Child Protection Procedures.

CEDT Social Workers are expected to follow all relevant legislation, policies and procedures. These include any requirements expected of a professional social worker. It is the team manager's responsibility to make sure any new policies or procedures are communicated to team members. Team members are not required to have full information on all the procedures in the 4 boroughs. They are expected to be aware of any procedures and policies established in LB Sutton. In particular all CEDT Social Workers should have a copy and be aware of the contents of:

- The London Child Protection Procedures.
- Working Together
- What to do if we're Worried a Child is Being Abused
- PACE.
- GSCC Codes of Practice.

### **MANAGEMENT SUPPORT**

The CEDT Team Manager is responsible for the management and administration of the service on behalf of the four boroughs. The manager works part time and office hours and is not normally available for consultation during the hours CEDT is operating. The following are the principal sources of support for CEDT social workers:

#### **Contacting an On-call Manager**

CEDT social workers operate independently and do not have a regular need to contact a manager. All the social workers in the team are very experienced but also work alone. They use each other on a 'consultative' basis, and may regularly speak to their colleague on duty with them to check out a proposed line of action.

As stated above the respective on-call manager for each authority should be called in the following circumstances:

- A request for the accommodation of a child
- A child protection investigation
- Any serious incident that would require the director of Children's Services to be informed
- Press interest

There may be other times when the social worker feels that consultation with the manager is required or would be helpful.

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The social worker should attempt to elicit all relevant information before making a call so that the best-informed discussion can take place.

If the on-call manager has not responded within 30 minutes, consideration should be given to calling other managers from that authority. If an on-call manager expects to be unavailable for a period of time, they should contact the call centre to let the service know.

In addition the Sutton on-call manager may be contacted for assistance in cases where the other borough manager is not contactable or for professional disagreement with other boroughs' managers or other agencies.

In terms of Child Protection work, reference should always be made to the 'London Child Protection Procedures' and in particular 7.4.1. LA children's social care is the lead agency for child protection enquiries and the LA children's social care manager has responsibility for authorising a s47 enquiry. Where there is a referral requiring a Section 47 investigation and the child remains at risk from the potential identified harm, after completing as much work as possible the CEDT social worker must contact the line manager for guidance. For CEDT this would be the on-call manager for the relevant borough.

At the time of making the call, the on-call manager is in the position of line manager to the social worker on duty.

Any such discussion needs to be recorded by the CEDT Social Worker.

The relevant manager may request sight of the referral, either by agreeing with the duty social worker at the time that they will be sent the referral by email, or by contacting the CEDT admin officer on 0208 770 4322.

No contact with the on-call manager is needed for the provision of emergency food or overnight B&B accommodation in cases related to homelessness.

### **Press and Publicity or Inspectors Enquiries**

CEDT Social Workers are not authorised to talk to the press. All enquiries should be redirected to the Press and Publicity Office. Should the CEDT Social Worker receive any direct enquiry about a case from CSCI/Ofsted they will immediately notify the relevant on-call manager.

### **RISK MANAGEMENT**

This section should be read in addition to other health and safety procedures by the London Borough of Sutton.

These are some of the main safety considerations for all social workers:

- Assessment of possible isolated location of visit.
- While visiting hospitals and police stations, it is important to re-evaluate personal safety at all times during visit. It may be that something is said, or someone arrives causing subsequent concern. Be aware of escape routes.



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- It is important to carry a charged working mobile phone and panic alarm.
- When worried or concerned, trust that concern and do not visit until you have discussed the situation with the on-call manager first to discuss your concerns.
- Social workers should not normally take a service user into their own car alone.
- The CEDT Social workers must be careful not to give out their personal phone number, either directly, or by allowing the receiver to pick it up automatically. The 'blocking' code should be used for all calls to private numbers (i.e. dial 141 before dialling the number – or it is possible to arrange to have call information blocked for all outgoing calls).

### Lone Working

The out of hours social worker acts on his/her own without active management support and direction. CEDT Social Workers need to take care of themselves and make a risk assessment every time they leave their home.

A risk assessment should be made on the basis of known information before visiting unknown service users and normally, visits are or should be made in pairs (either with the police or with hospital staff). Calls should be made to Civic/Careline to check service users' details on the corporate warning system and case notes.

There are occasions when a very speedy response is needed to children or vulnerable adults thought to be at immediate physical risk. At such times it can be more appropriate to ask the Police to respond initially and to report back their assessment, especially if there is not enough time or information to make an adequate risk assessment.

### Visit or No Visit

Service users should not be visited alone without an assessment of risks. Circumstances in which accompanied visiting may be required include;

- Section 47 investigations with Police involvement
- Emergency removal of a child with Police presence

Besides the issues around the actual visits, there are concerns for CEDT Social Workers operating at unsocial hours with the consequent potential dangers of walking around alone with few people around. Social workers should take ordinary precautions e.g. being aware of anyone around them, panic alarm at the ready. If the worker has significant concerns about the locality for a particular visit for whatever reason, they should not continue to make the visit, but should try and find someone with whom they can go to the house together. This may often be the police. Mobile Phones and Panic alarms are available for all social workers in the team.

Depending on staff availability, security staff have agreed to accompany social workers from the Civic Offices to Sutton Police station if this is requested.

For all visits CEDT Social Workers will inform the Civic Security worker if they are going out on a visit. They will supply information of the details of who, where (including address and telephone number) and time of the visit, the staff involved, the

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registration/make/model and colour of any car used and the expected duration to Civic Security. On completing the visit, the social worker must telephone Civic Security

If callout is likely to exceed estimated completion time and it is safe to do so, the social worker should telephone Civic Security to give a revised completion time. If the social worker has not contacted Civic Security by the estimated completion time, then Security Officer will telephone the social worker. If no response is received from the social worker within 10 minutes, Police will be contacted and the on-call manager informed.

In the event that the social worker is in danger, s/he should attempt to telephone Civic Security with the message "I am going to be late for my next appointment" which will be a signal for Civic Security to contact the Police

On being contacted by Security after failing to call by the estimated completion time, the social worker should explain to the service user that it is necessary to respond to the call/bleep or the Police will be contacted automatically.

### **Starting Duty and Handover Arrangements**

All staff taking part in CEDT duty must make contact with the CEDT Team Administrator or the other CEDT social worker at the commencement of their shift. The social worker must also log onto their computer and open both personal and team email boxes and read Alerts from daytime staff.

### **Mobile Phones**

Mobile phones are provided to CEDT Social Worker.

Recommendations for Staff Safety;

- Ensure that the mobile phone is fully charged and ready for use.
- Keep your phone out of sight when you are in public places such as when we are walking in the street.
- Do not use the phone while driving; it is illegal and a disciplinary offence.
- If you are not using your phone, keep it turned off.
- Use any security features that are built in to your phone, such as additional security codes.
- If your phone is lost or stolen report it immediately

If the phone is stolen, report to network operator (e.g., O2, virgin etc), and the police as quickly as possible - the handset can then be barred on all networks and will be useless to criminals. Even if the SIM card is changed, the phone will no longer work on any UK network.

## **CHILD PROTECTION INVESTIGATIONS**

CEDT are governed by the London Child Protection Procedures.

When there is a referral which may be child protection, the duty social worker should work within these Procedures.

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In all such cases, the duty social worker should check whether the child is the subject of a Child Protection Plan.

The duty social worker should attempt to gain as much information as possible and record this carefully in making a decision as to whether the referral constitutes a child protection referral. Section 4 of the London Child Protection Procedures gives helpful advice in making such decisions.

The duty social worker should then telephone the on-call manager for the relevant authority to agree further steps.

CEDT's responsibility is to investigate until satisfied the child will be safe until the next working day. Any action we take must be to safeguard the child's safety.

It is not CEDT's task to undertake a full disclosure interview, or even a full investigation of all the circumstances. But on some occasions CEDT may need to do all this. Again, our threshold is to go as far as necessary to make sure the child is safe.

CEDT should either see the child or ensure that the child has been seen by a responsible professional person.

Where it is judged that this is not necessary or has not been possible, the reason should be recorded.

CEDT are not responsible for undertaking wither Initial or Core Assessments under the Integrated Children's System, although the information that they acquire or the action that they take may be used as part of such assessment.

### **Immediate consideration should be given to:**

- A child death
- Is the child safe in their current location?
- Is urgent medical attention or a Child Protection medical required?
- Has the child been seen by a professional? If not, what arrangements can be made to ensure that the child is seen?
- An analysis of risk to the child for the period up until the case can be taken over by the Day Service.
- An analysis of risk to any other children in the family/ household.
- A referral to the Child Abuse Investigation Team.
- Possible loss of evidence, where there is an allegation of a possible criminal offence, a referral must be made to the Police.
- The child is subject to a Child Protection Plan.
- The child is or young person looked after by the Council (including children in respite care) or a care leaver
- The suspected or alleged perpetrator (if known) is a member of the Council's staff, or that of any other provider agency or organisation, a Police officer, foster carer or in a position of power

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Ensuring that the child is seen and that the risks have been assessed is the overall responsibility of the CEDT. We need to work in close collaboration with colleagues from other agencies, principally the Police and Health, but we are the lead agency in Child Protection cases. Where there are immediate concerns or risks needing investigation contact should be made with the Police Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT) Officer on call, so that a plan of action, including roles and who to involve, can be agreed. The social worker should contact the local Police Control Room for discussion with Duty Inspector and access to the Police CAIT if required.

Contact details are as follows:

0800-1600 Sat and Sunday, either 0208721 7400 or 0207230 3700

All other times either 0207230 8315 or the Scotland Yard switchboard 0207230 1212.

If it is not possible to contact CAIT through these numbers, then contact the local station.

Details of any other children in the family household should be recorded and there should be an assessment of any potential risks to them. All such referrals should be passed on at handovers. All recording should have a clear outcome.

The CEDT social worker should record any manager's name who gave giving advice, guidance and instructions on the CEDT record.

CEDT will discuss the referral with the referrer and take full details of the concern and reason for referral. The wishes of referrers wanting to remain confidential should be fully respected and this highlighted as such on any recording.

Service users should be given information regarding the ongoing process and that the matter has been recorded and will be passed to day services.

Where there is a concern that a crime may have been committed, decisions to interview the child and parents must be made jointly with Police.

Where appropriate a medical examination by the on-call community child health specialist should be arranged via the hospital switchboard.

If necessary, each authority will have arrangements to access emergency legal advice.

Consultation with the legal contact for the relevant borough should take place where it appears there may be a need for emergency protection.

For Merton and Richmond the on-call manager will have details of how to contact their legal adviser.

Magistrates may be accessed via the local Court Clerk.

Incidents or allegations of sexual abuse on children by strangers and child on child abuse are dealt with currently by CID officers and not CAIT officers, though advice may still be

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taken from the CAIT. The interviewing of children and sometimes perpetrators is dealt with by CAIT.

### Carrying Out an Investigation

Decisions should be made with the on-call CAIT officer (or the Duty Inspector in their absence) as to whether a joint visit should be made. Staff safety needs be considered especially where families are unknown or violence or aggressive behaviour is an aspect of past or current referrals. This decision **must** be recorded.

Where concerns referred indicate that a child is in immediate need of protection or has already suffered significant harm a visit to the home must take place (by police initially if out of hours staff are not available to respond immediately or there is great urgency) and the child(ren) **must** be seen.

Depending on the concerns, the child's age, the time of day etc. the child may need to be interviewed and the individuals who have Parental Responsibility should also be seen. A further discussion with the referrer (if possible) should take place to clarify information and inform them of the outcome, where appropriate.

CEDT will need to determine the level of risk for the child and how we can best protect him/her. CEDT must decide if a medical examination (usually by a Paediatrician at A&E or occasionally by a Police Surgeon at a Police examination suite) needs to take place (usually in consultation with the CAIT) and make the necessary arrangements.

The child must consent to a medical examination if he/she is of sufficient age and understanding to make an informed decision. Where an Emergency Protection Order is being made it is possible under Section 44(6) (b) for the Court to give directions as it considers appropriate with respect to the medical or psychiatric or other assessment of the child.

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Throughout the investigation, the child, parents, carers and people with parental responsibility who are not subject of investigation will be given as much information as is compatible with the child's welfare and the investigation, about the reasons for the investigation and any action to be taken. CEDT must take account of any communication difficulties that the parents, child or others may have.

### Third party referrals

When a third party referral is made to CEDT, the Social Worker should endeavour to obtain the following information:

- 
- The name, age and address of the child allegedly abused.
  - Details of the child's family.
  - What is alleged and what has been seen by the informant.
  - Date and time of the occurrence.
  - Identity of alleged abuser.
- 

The informant should be told that all details of the referral will be passed to Social Services, who will undertake an investigation in consultation with the Police. Information that is passed to the NSPCC is usually sent to the Social Services for further investigation.

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The name of the informant need not necessarily be passed to the Social Services, although it is desirable to obtain permission to do so whenever possible and for any information to be recorded contemporaneously. Where possible these records should be signed by the third party.

### Direct referrals by a child

When a referral is made directly by a child, CEDT must explain their duty to pass the information on to Social Services. If information is passed to the NSPCC it should be made clear to the child that the Social Services will be informed.

Whenever possible, the professional to whom the disclosure was made should support the child to help him/her repeat the information to a Social Worker and / or Police Officer. In any event the professional should, if possible, stay with the child to support him / her through the initial process of disclosure and investigation.

It is important that all professionals involved with a child disclosing abuse explain possible outcomes and keeps the child informed of events. The child should be assured that the adults have responsibility for their care and safety.

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### **Consent for medical examination or treatment in emergency**

A child who is 16, or under 16 when the doctor considers they are able to understand the implications, may give or withhold consent to medical examination and/or treatment in their own right even if an order exists. When possible the permission of someone with parental responsibility should be sought for children under 16 prior to emergency medical examination and treatment except:

- when the child is subject to a Care Order, the local authority can give permission
- when the child is provided with accommodation under the Children Act 1989 and the parent/carer(s) has signed forms giving authority or has abandoned the child or is physically or mentally incapable, the local authority may give permission
- When the child is a Ward of Court, permission must be obtained from the High Court.

When circumstances do not allow permission to be obtained and the child needs emergency medical treatment:

- the medical practitioner may regard the child to be of an age and level of understanding to give consent
- the child's teacher in loco parentis, may give permission providing it is not against the expressed wish of the parent/carer(s)
- The medical practitioner may decide to proceed without consent.
- In such circumstances the SW must inform the parents as soon as possible about the circumstances of the child and the action taken. A full record must be made at the time.

### **Children who cannot be located and seen**

If following a referral a child's whereabouts are unknown or they cannot be traced and seen within 24 hours the SW must:

- discuss the situation with Police Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT) convene a

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- strategy meeting within 1 working day
- consider reporting the child missing to the divisional police (*see missing child local protocol in these procedures*)
- agree with the manager responsible for the investigation what further action is required to locate and see the child and carry out the investigation (*see missing child local protocol in these procedures*)

### Additional Child Protection Matters

Additional links to specific Child Protection Procedures are attached as Appendix 1.

### The Saffron Suite

The Saffron Suite is a small/medium sized portable accommodation sited at Mayday University Hospital NHS Trust. It is used to interview child victims.

Mayday Healthcare NHS Trust  
Mayday University Hospital  
530 London Road  
Croydon  
CR7 7YE  
Telephone: 020 8401 3000

### The Havens

Anyone in London who has been raped or sexually assaulted can come to a Haven. Women, men and children can all attend. They are specially trained, experienced professionals who can give:

- medical help and advice
- counselling
- practical and emotional support

They can help victims through the immediate trauma and guide victims along the road to recovery. They can help victims decide what we want to do next, like whether victims want to talk to the police or have any health checks. At The Haven, they can offer victims a place of safety and all the support and help victims need to recover. This service is provided confidentially and will not involve the police unless we specifically request it.

### Haven - Camberwell

King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS  
Telephone number - **020 3299 1599** 9am - 5pm Monday to Friday, or **020 3299 9000** at all other times. Web: [www.thehavens.org.uk](http://www.thehavens.org.uk)

### Who are The Havens for?

Anyone in London who has been raped or sexually assaulted can come to a Haven. Women, men and children can all attend. The Havens are open between 9:00am and 5pm.

### Referrals Regarding Looked After Children

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Where a Child Protection referral is received regarding a child looked after by one of the authorities and the allegation is regarding a foster carer or member of staff, the relevant section of the London Child Protection Procedures should be followed.

The on-call manager for the relevant authority should be called.

A decision needs to be taken about whether immediate action is required to ensure the safety of the child and whether they need to be removed from their placement or whether the situation requires further investigation before such a decision is taken.

It may be necessary to see the child or to speak to them if the placement is at some distance.

### **CHILD DEATH**

In the event of a child death being reported to CEDT, it is important to establish whether the death was expected or unexpected.

An unexpected death is defined as the death of a child (birth to 18 years, excluding babies stillborn) which was not anticipated as a significant possibility 24 hours before the death or where there was a similarly unexpected collapse leading to or precipitating the events which led to the death. (London Child Protection Procedures).

When an unexpected death occurs, please consult the Rapid Response Procedures: [http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/files/resources/cdop/rapid\\_response\\_procedure.pdf](http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/files/resources/cdop/rapid_response_procedure.pdf)

If the CEDT worker is the first professional at the scene of death, they should immediately call an ambulance and the Police. Death should not be assumed.

Where an unexpected death has been reported the health professionals are instructed to contact children's social care as soon as possible.

Where there is any indication that there are child protection concerns regarding the death, the assessment procedures will need to be followed. It will be necessary to consider whether there are any other children within the family that may need to be considered. As with other child protection cases, the relevant on-call manager should be informed.

In all cases it will be necessary to ensure that information is gathered and carefully recorded. Close co-operation with other professionals will be essential.

It is also important to consider the needs of all other family members during this period and consider what assistance can be offered.

When sending in any report regarding a child death, whether explained or unexplained, the social worker should indicate this to the CEDT admin officer.

### **CHILD IN NEED ASSESSMENTS**



## **CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES**

Where a referral is received for the assessment of a child in need under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, the CEDT social worker will first assess whether action is needed before the start of the next working day.

If emergency assistance is required, for example the child has no access to food or shelter the CEDT social worker will take immediate action to meet these needs.

Any request for financial support should in the first instance be passed to the Benefits Agency Out of Hours Service or encouraged to borrow from a third party.

Again, it is not intended that CEDT social workers will undertake Initial Assessments but the information that they acquire or action that they take may inform such assessment.

Where no emergency action is required then information will be recorded and passed to day services.

CEDT social workers have access to a cash float that can be used to give cash to families.

CEDT social workers also have access to Travel Warrants.

### **Children with disabilities**

Where children and young people have disabilities and there are crisis situations - efforts should be made to support them and their carers/families. Some children with disabilities have regular respite carers who may help in an emergency. Lastly, agency care workers as part of a care package could be used to support them to stay at home.

### **Domestic Violence**

There is considerable evidence of the emotional impact of witnessing domestic violence on children.

It is also true that many incidents of domestic violence take place when parents or carers are intoxicated.

Careful consideration should be made when referrals are received regarding such incidents and children are present as to whether the threshold for child protection investigations has been met and whether immediate action is required.

### **REQUESTS FOR ACCOMMODATING CHILDREN**

CEDT may receive a request for the accommodation of a child or young person under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

Children should only be accommodated when it is clear that this is the only way to maintain their safety until the next working day.

All such requests should be referred to the on-call manager after as much information as possible has been acquired.

## **CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES**

Accommodation under Section 20 can only be made following:

- The agreement of a person with parental responsibility
- If the child has been abandoned.

Where more than one person has parental responsibility every effort should be made to consult with all of them unless doing so would put the child at risk.

Every effort should be made to avoid accommodating the child where this would not compromise their safety.

If the child cannot remain with a person with parental responsibility it is advisable to investigate whether there is any other member of the family or friend that could care for the child. Parents or the child themselves may know of such contacts. If possible, the CEDT social worker should also check any relevant Alerts or database to discover whether there are such family contacts available. The social worker should always check whether there is any recording on the relevant database regarding the relative or friend.

Where such placements are made, it is important to establish the legal basis for the placement. In general the placement will be made with the agreement of the person with parental responsibility and the local authority is enabling this arrangement on their behalf. This should be clearly stated to the person in question and the conversation recorded.

### **EMERGENCY ORDERS**

Where agreement has not been possible with those with Parental Responsibility and there is immediate risk to the child, then it will be necessary to consider legal measures to ensure the placement of the child.

Where the Police are involved, they may consider the use of their powers under Police Protection to save injury.

Where it is not possible to use Police Protection, then consideration should be made as to whether there are grounds for application for an Emergency Protection Order under Section 44 of the Children Act 1989.

Such action should only be taken after consultation with the relevant on-call manager.

Where possible, the legal adviser for the relevant authority should be consulted.

Where a child is subject to an Order, placements with members of the family or friends should still be considered. However, it will not be possible to make such placements informally. Placements will be made under Regulation 38 of the Fostering Regulations 2002. The carer should sign an agreement.

### **MAKING PLACEMENTS**

## **CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES**

For the majority of children requiring placements where there is no available family member or friend willing or able to take them, a foster placement will be required.

Each authority will have given information regarding available placements.

Where such placements are not available, for example if a child has already been placed, it is possible to request the use of a placement from another authority from the on-call manager of the second authority.

Where possible, the CEDT worker will accompany the child to the placement.

The social worker must complete, in conjunction with the parent/carer and with as much information as possible the LAC forms Essential Information Record 1 and Placement Plan 1.

If possible one or more of the people with parental responsibility should sign the LAC form.

As a minimum, the foster carer should receive the following information:

- Child's name and date of birth
- Parent's name(s) and contact details
- Any known medical information on the child
- Any risk factors
- The name of the child's allocated social worker if they have one
- The legal basis for the placement a copy of any relevant Order if available
- Any arrangements for the next working day, e.g. attendance at school.
- Any contact arrangements

The child should be seen and a full explanation given to him/her about what is happening.

The child's personal belongings, any medication and adequate clothing should be packed in an appropriate case or bag to accompany him/her.

The parent should be given information about where their child is unless there is a concern that the child or carer will be at risk if this information is disclosed. If it is decided not to tell the parents of the address, then the reasons should be recorded.

Where it is not appropriate to place the child in a foster home, then the CEDT worker should consider placement in a residential unit.

Permanent staff now have access to the London Care Placements website as a first place to seek emergency residential placements.

The same issues about information and paperwork for the unit will apply.

## **CHILDREN LEFT AT SCHOOL, NURSERY, CHILDREN'S CENTRES AND CLUBS**

At the end of the school, nursery, children's centre or club if a child is not collected by their parent or carer they should remain at the school, nursery, children's centre or club.

## **CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES**

The Head teacher or Manager should try the available telephone contact numbers to locate the parent/guardian/carer. If the child is not collected the CEDT Social Worker should be contacted to arrange an emergency placement.

### **SUPPORT FOR FOSTER CARERS**

It is the role of CEDT to offer support to local authority foster carers looking after children placed by one of the four boroughs.

Foster Carers are professional experienced childcare workers who are on duty 24 hours a day and 7 days per week. They work in isolation, and often need help and support. During the day, they turn to the day teams. But, often, crises arise out of hours, so they contact CEDT.

It is important that we take all requests for help from foster parents seriously, and that (all else being equal) we offer to spend as long as needed in giving support. On many occasions, the foster parents may not actually be requiring us to do anything, other than to listen and empathise. If we are in the middle of dealing with other urgent matters, we must explain this to the foster carer and offer to call back.

Independent fostering agencies often have their own out of hours' managers, and we will find ourselves working with them in addition to the foster parent.

It is important that we differentiate between routine calls from foster parents, informing us a child has absconded, and calls where further and fuller action is required by us (including where a child has absconded – see below).

CEDT offer advice and support to children and young people outside office hours, who are looked after or in supported lodgings or independent living arrangements. The primary objective will be to ensure the safety of the young person and to prevent a breakdown of a placement.

CEDT will offer advice and support to carers where possible. The service provides telephone advice, support and counselling to foster carers and other carers at times of crisis where workload priorities allow. Where there is a serious risk of breakdown of a placement, CEDT social workers should visit with the prime objective of avoiding moving a child in a crisis outside of office hours and without the necessary planning and preparation unless there are serious safety concerns.

### **MISSING CHILDREN**

Children go missing in a number of different circumstances. Whilst all missing children are vulnerable the response required will depend on a number of factors. The purpose of the guidance is to promote practice that will

- Reduce the number of children that go missing
- Ensure that children who go missing are appropriately supported

## **CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES**

This should be read as guidance which cannot anticipate every situation. CEDT should use their professional judgement to take action they feel that is necessary to protect the safety of the child, based on an assessment of risk for each individual child.

CEDT will mainly deal with children who are looked after by one of the local authorities.

Where a referral is received regarding a child living at home, the parent should be requested to report the matter to the Police. CEDT would only generally be involved in such situations where there are additional risk factors, such as that the child has gone missing as a result of parental violence or threats. If the parent, carer or person with parental responsibility refuses to make or allow a referral to the Police or to the Children and Family Service and the provider is concerned about a possibility of significant harm to the child, they should consider whether to make a referral without permission. In these circumstances any challenge by the parent, carer or person with parental responsibility would be rebutted on the basis of the Children Act duty on the provider to inform the local authority when there are concerns about the possibility of significant harm occurring to the child (*Working Together to Safeguard Children, DoH, DfEE, Home Office, 1999, paragraph 5.6*).

### **Categories of Absence**

All looked after children who are absent whether unauthorised or missing will have a decision made about whether it is believed to be an absconded child, an unauthorised absence or a missing child.

### **Pre- Risk Assessments**

All children accommodated by the local authority will have a pre-Individual risk assessments completed at the point of placement. This will enable staff/carers to be clear what the risks are for a particular child and/or the risks they pose for the public. A risk assessment will help staff to decide whether/when a child should be reported if they are missing and to share full and accurate information with the police and other agencies. The assessment of the likely risk to any individual needs to be based on a detailed knowledge of their history, their skill levels, their likely motivations, the pattern of recent absences (if any) and where they are likely to go. The record of the risk assessment is to be noted on the agreed departmental form. In assessing the significance of a child's absence, all staff must apply the above definitions and take into consideration guidance already agreed on and incorporated into the child's care plan including:

- The age of the child;
- The legal status of the child;
- Previous behaviour and history;
- The emotional needs of the child, e.g., whether there has been any variation in their mood or whether they have expressed any intention to harm themselves or others;
- Behaviour of the child as influenced by peer groups or others;
- Whether the child is perceived as running to/running from someone/something;

## CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES

- The risk of offending;
- The risk that the child may be targeted for sexual exploitation.
- The likelihood of the child going missing;
- The child's view;
- The level of supervision/support that care staff propose to provide for the child;
- The views of parents/carers on their child's needs and the action that needs to be taken if the child is absent;
- The risk of harm to the child and his/her vulnerability if he/she is absent;
- Consideration of any external influences which may result in a child's removal without consent;
- The likelihood of the child being harboured;
- Ascertain from the child or young person – if they go missing where they are likely to run away to.

The child should have this procedure explained to him/her and the potential dangers that they may encounter so that he/she understands the implications of running.

This assessment will assist in decision regarding the current status of the current absence.

### Absconded Child/ren

Definition:

Where a child is considered missing and is remanded or on a curfew, tagged, conditions of residence or other bail conditions, Anti Social Behaviour orders or a Secure Accommodation Order.

Actions to be considered:

- Make enquiries to locate the child and search premises
- Inform/contact family and those with parental responsibility
- Report child missing to the police immediately providing full details of risk assessment and the 'Missing from Care' form.
- Inform on-call manager

### Categories of Risk

**High** - the child is not where they should be and their whereabouts are not known and there is evidence of immediate and/or significant risk of harm to them or to others; or, if they are not where they should be and their whereabouts are known or suspected, there is serious cause for concern about their welfare e.g. known offenders or risky adults. Any child of 12 years or younger whose whereabouts is unknown will automatically be considered as at high risk and classed as missing or absconded. They must be reported to the police immediately.

**Medium** – The child is not where they should be and their whereabouts are known and or suspected and there is no immediate cause for concern.

## **CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES**

**Low** - the category of unauthorised absence are normally lower risk. When reporting such children to the police the risk level will be noted and while these young people remain missing they should be subject to continuing risk assessment.

### **Unauthorised Absence/ Missing Child**

Where CEDT are contacted regarding a child absent from placement, there should be a discussion between the referrer and the social worker as to whether the child should be regarded as being absent without authorisation or if they should be reported as missing.

Regard should be given to the risk assessment above and whether the current whereabouts of the child is actually known.

If it is decided that they are reported missing, the carer will report the child to the Police.

If it is decided that they are absent without authorisation, it should be agreed at what time this decision should be reviewed.

Where a child is missing from placement, the following action should be considered:

- search of premises and immediate location
- inform others with parental responsibility
- conduct a risk assessment;
- contact family and friends of the child
- check local hospitals for emergency admission
- inform school and general practitioner
- report child missing to the police providing full details of risk assessment

If a LAC is missing for 48 hours, the On-call manager will be notified and will take the decision whether to inform the Executive Director if a child is missing for 72 hours there will be a Strategy Meeting of Senior Officers - Service Managers and other appropriate staff from Child Care and Police will convene.

Where a child is missing and the risk is assessed as high or immediate, for example a very young child, the on-call manager should be informed.

### **Return of a missing child**

Where a looked after child returns to their placement, the CEDT social worker should check that they have returned unharmed. If possible they should attempt to speak to the child.

On the return of a missing child living at home the police will whenever possible conduct a short "debrief" interview with the child to confirm they are safe and well and give them an opportunity to discuss the reasons for running away. The police may conduct the "debrief" interview at the child's home, over the telephone or at the police station dependent on circumstances. If the child does not wish to speak to the Police, they cannot be compelled to do so but the officers dealing with the case will usually speak to the parent or carer who

## CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES

reported the child missing.

In some cases the Police may be concerned about the circumstances of the child and the parent or carer refuses a referral to the Children and Family Service. In these circumstances officers dealing with the case should consider the need to refer against the wishes of the parent or carer (for example if they have concern about a possible risk of significant harm).

### **Action for Children missing during external activity of a residential home/youth club/child care setting.**

If a child goes missing whilst on an external activity or trip, the Trip Leader should

- Inform the person with parental responsibility/carer.
- Inform the police, if the risk assessment indicates such.

If a child becomes absent outside their area, the carer in charge of the external activity or holiday will:

- Arrange a search in the area where the child became absent;
- Notify the local police for that area;
- Notify the child's parents or guardian;
- Notify the child's social worker or the accountable team manager;
- Notify a senior manager at the home if relevant;
- Notify the Youth Offending Team if the Child or Young Person is on remand;
- Notify the emergency duty team if out-of-hours.

## RECORDING

Every referral must be recorded by the CEDT Social Worker on the report form. CEDT Social Workers are expected to email their report before 9am on the next working day to the Sutton email box, [childrensdayservice@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:childrensdayservice@sutton.gov.uk). It is the responsibility of the receiving agent to make sure the email report is dealt with immediately, or if emailed to the wrong place, to make the necessary arrangements to forward the report to the relevant office.

If the referral relates to a significantly serious matter, CEDT Social Workers are expected to highlight this in their emailed report. However, the CEDT Social Worker is deemed to have discharged their duty once they have emailed their report.

In some circumstance it will be necessary to complete as much as is possible of the 'Looking After Children: Essential Information Record: Part 1' and 'Looking After Children Placement Plan Part 1: Placement Agreement'. In many circumstances the CEDT Social Worker will not have sufficient information to warrant completion of these forms.

Reports should normally include basic family/home relationships, next of kin, and details of key informal and professional carers, employment information, and ethnicity (refer to Triangle of Needs).



## **CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES**

The source of all information in the report must be recorded, and distinction should be made between fact and opinion.

It is also important to record information on any person contacted (name, address & phone number, relationship with referrer, and time of contact). When more than one contact has been made, it is important to note this and the reason for any subsequent contact.

### **TRANSPORT & PETTY CASH**

Where a taxi has been used, the CEDT Social Worker must complete an 'CEDT Taxi Details' form and submit this to the Team Administrator. Where a travel warrant has been used, the 'Travel Warrant' form must be submitted to the Team Administrator. It is extremely important to record accurately on the front sheet all the relevant information.

CEDT Social Workers have a petty cash float. This should be used to make payments under Section 17 or for urgent assistance for homeless young people placed in accommodation under housing legislation. Service users should initially be referred to the Benefits Agency.

#### **Taxi Services/Escorts**

Cabs should only be used where a service user is unable to travel safely by public transport. Care should be taken not to endanger the safety of taxi drivers. It may be necessary in situations of domestic violence for the victim to meet a taxi somewhere other than the address from which they are fleeing.

Secure transport is only authorised where a child is subject to a Secure Order or has been sentenced to remand in a Secure Training Centre. Taxis with escorts can be used to assist in transporting young people but for children under 12 years old.

### **CHILD SEATS**

Drivers are legally responsible for making sure that children under 14 years use seat belts or child restraints in cars. As a driver, if we are convicted of failing to ensure that a child passenger is using an appropriate child restraint or wearing a seat belt according to the legal requirements we could face a £30 fixed penalty notice. If a case goes to court, the maximum fine is £500.

All children up to 135 cms in height (approx 4ft 5ins) must use the appropriate child restraint.

"Child restraints" is the collective term in the seat belt wearing legislation for:

- Baby seats - rear-facing and for children up to 13 kgs (approx age birth to 9-12 months) Rear-facing baby seats must not be used in a seat protected by a frontal air-bag unless the air-bag has been deactivated manually or automatically.
- Child seats - forward facing and for children 9 kgs to 18 kgs (approx 9 months to 4 years)
- Booster seats - for children 15 kgs to 25 kgs (approx 4 to 6 years);
- Booster cushions - for children 6 years and up.

## **CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES**

The law requires that for children's safety we may not carry children in just a seat belt until they are over 135cm however adult seat belts are best for people over 150 cms (approx 5') in height and with an adult bone structure.

Children who travel in a taxi under 3 years must always have a child seat. The only exception is when they travel in the rear of taxis and a child seat is not available.

There is also a special exemption for children over 3 years on an occasional journey (e.g. unforeseen emergency) over a short distance. The child must still use an adult belt and sit in the rear. If a car has 3 seat belts in the rear, and 2 occupied child seats or boosters prevent the fitting of a third, a third child 3 years or over may then use an adult belt. If there is room, however it would be safer for the third child to travel in the front seat and use the correct child seat or booster.

If there are not enough seat belts or child restraints in the car for all the passengers, then some may legally travel in the rear of the vehicle without wearing a seat belt. This may be legal, but it is not safe. The safest option is to only carry the same number of passengers as there are seat belts. If necessary, use two cars or make two journeys for the trip. If we must carry a passenger for whom there is no seat belt, it is better for the heaviest passengers to wear a seat belt, because they would cause more severe injuries to other people in the car if they are thrown about in a crash.

The law will be changing in May 2009 to prevent the carriage of more passengers than there are seat belts, and the exact details of this law will be announced by the Department for Transport closer to the time.

## **HIV/AIDS**

Because of the stigma attached to HIV/AIDS, confidentiality is of the utmost importance. Information about a person's HIV status can only be shared with that person's explicit consent (or, in the case of a child not able to give informed consent on their own behalf, that of a person with parental responsibility). This applies to the sharing of information with colleagues in the same team, other teams in the local authority and other agencies - exceptions to this rule are allowed in strictly limited circumstances.

Disclosure that children are affected by HIV is never justified on the basis that it might help protect those involved in the care and treatment of a child with HIV infection. Protection is achieved by ensuring that standard hygiene and infection control procedures are followed by all staff and carers at all times family Centre workers, SW's, foster carers, childminders, school staff and others caring for children cannot assume they will be told if a child in their care is HIV positive.

## **CARERS ASSESSMENT**

- Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000
- Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004

The 2000 Act places a duty on local councils, when requested by a carer, to carry out a carer's assessment and decide whether to provide services for them.

## **CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES**

The 2004 Act places a duty on local councils to inform carers of their right to an assessment; and to take into account, in the assessment, the carer's involvement in (or wish to do) work, training, or a leisure activity.

Carers may need to have their needs separately assessed to help them where possible to continue to cope. Where emergency resources are used all involved need to be made aware that such services are provided only until the next working day when work will commence on further assessment of the service user's (and carer's) needs.

### **Children from Outside of the 4 Borough's or Residents in Hospitals and Police Stations outside the 4 Borough's boundary.**

Children referred, who live outside the boroughs need to be returned to their borough of residence as soon as possible if this is assessed as necessary.

Discussions with their local authority emergency social work team need to take place to assess how to return them, and agree on costs which should be paid by the home authority.

Recording should include agreements made so that costs can be reclaimed.

The general principle is that where an assessment is requested this is the responsibility of the local authority where the person is at that time. Reciprocal arrangements can be made with neighbouring boroughs.

## **INTERPRETER SERVICES & SIGN LANGUAGE**

The London Borough of Sutton has a contract with Language Line to provide an interpreting service. Language Line's number is 08453109900. The access code is L8733.

If none is available, try the Police or local hospitals. The CEDT administrative Officer should be informed when such services are used.

It is the police or hospitals responsibility to arrange interpreting services if they require it.

## **MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS ON YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 18 YEARS.**

### **Principles**

- Every avenue should be explored before a formal Mental Health Act Assessment (MHAA) on a young person is undertaken.
- Referrals on young people should wherever possible be investigated initially by CEDT and referred from CEDT to AEDT when a formal assessment appears to be needed.
- AEDT will take the lead on the formal Mental Health Assessment of the young person but CEDT will hold overall responsibility for the case over the emergency period.
- CEDT will support the ASW throughout the assessment process as required.

### **Procedure**

## **CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES**

All referrals on young people under 18 years old with mental health problems will be referred initially to the CEDT Social Worker.

The CEDT Social Worker will consult any alerts, check the database for background information and make the necessary enquiries with the referrer and relevant parties.

Where enquiries indicate that all alternative options to a Mental Health Assessment have been exhausted, the CEDT Social Worker will refer to the AEDT Social Worker for discussion. It is the AEDT Social Worker's decision whether a formal MHAA will proceed.

Where an MHAA is not advised, the CEDT Social Worker will assess the immediate needs of the child and set up support arrangements for the young person/family until the next working day in consultation with the AEDT Social Worker.

Where an MHAA is advised, the AEDT Social Worker will take responsibility for setting up and implementing the assessment. The CEDT Social Worker will still be expected to support the MHAA process as required by the AEDT Social Worker.

The exception is referrals for assessment under Section 136 Mental Health Act 1983 and requests for emergency assessments from Kingston or St Helier's Hospitals, which will be referred directly to the AEDT Social Worker.

With direct referrals the AEDT Social Worker will inform the CEDT Social Worker of their involvement with a request for background information where possible.

The AEDT Social Worker will undertake all S136 assessment requests within six hours – as outlined in the South West London & St George's Mental Health Trust policy. The CEDT Social Worker will still be expected to complete an initial assessment and to support the MHAA process as required by the AEDT Social Worker.

Where the young person is admitted informally or on section, the AEDT Social Worker will take the lead in implementing or organising follow up arrangements for the out of hours period in partnership with the CEDT SW – e.g. informing the family, visiting arrangements in hospital etc. The ASW will ensure that the key worker in the Children's Team is sent a copy of the AEDT Social Worker's Report as well as to others involved.

Where the young person is discharged from a Section 136 or not admitted to hospital by professionals doing a Mental Health Assessment, the ASW will be responsible for ensuring the family is informed and any initial clinical follow up is arranged e.g. referral to the Crisis Team for the emergency period, follow up referral to a specialist clinic, outpatient appointments. The CEDT SW will take the lead in ensuring all other aspects of the support package for the young person in the community for the emergency period.

## **HOUSING**

CEDT have responsibility for the emergency housing needs of:

- Families with children under the age of 18

## **CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES**

- Homeless children and young people
- Care leavers

### **ON-CALL HOUSING REPAIRS OFFICER**

The CEDT Social Worker can arrange for the securing of property by boarding up doors and windows if the property would otherwise be insecure.

The CEDT Social Worker can also send out an electrician or plumber to service users who are vulnerable and unable to organise such services themselves. This is a duty for those in Council tenancies but can be provided at a cost to Children and Families for other service uses. A request should only be made where there are no relatives, friends or neighbours able to arrange such emergency repairs as are needed. Day Service staff will then ascertain whether the service user needs to contribute once a financial assessment has been completed. All of this should be clearly recorded in the CEDT contact form sent to the area team.

### **HOMELESSNESS**

All referrals must be recorded using the CEDT Contact form and on completion of the case this must be emailed to the day service inbox for Sutton.

### **HOMELESS FAMILIES/YOUNG PEOPLE**

CEDT acts on behalf of the Homeless Persons Units, making emergency bed and breakfast placements as required.

Any booking for bed and breakfast is made only until the next working day. The service user needs to be informed that s/he must attend the Homeless Persons Unit of the relevant borough on the next working day. They must also be advised to contact the CEDT worker if they change their mind and decide not to take up the accommodation arranged.

It must be made clear to the family that they have been offered accommodation under the Housing Act.

Where accommodation has been provided under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, then this also needs to be made clear to the family.

Eligibility for accommodation depends on a person's vulnerability. A person is defined as vulnerable if they are under 18, physically disabled, suffering from mental illness, or learning disabled.

Before agreeing to provide accommodation, the CEDT worker should establish whether there are any other possibilities for the family until the next working day. Any alerts should be consulted. Even if the referrer meets the criteria, we should find any way of persuading them to find their own emergency accommodation, or to explore the option of returning to the place where they were the previous evening.

## CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES

If a decision is made that the person is vulnerable and needs to be accommodated, telephone to book a hotel from the list until next working day.

It must be explained to the person that this decision does not mean that they will be accepted by the Homeless Persons Unit as vulnerable or in need of continuing accommodation provided by the Local Authority.

Once the booking is arranged, fax or email confirmation to the hotel.

In cases of women fleeing domestic violence, accompanied by children, a check should be made for refuge places in preference to hotels (see DV).

Care needs to be exercised in identifying which of the 4 boroughs is responsible. What is the status of the last place they stayed? Check to clarify that they are eligible for the borough's service.

Any requests for the housing of vulnerable adults should be dealt with by the CEDT Social Worker. CEDT have are contracted by Housing Needs to provide their emergency services outside office hours. It may be possible during a temporary CEDT rota to have Housing staff available to deal with such referrals. The Housing Needs Operational Manager (currently Kim Fox) is always available for CEDT staff to consult. Telephone numbers in Information Pack. Housing staff occasionally fax to CEDT details of service users who may be referred or who have recently been dealt with by daytime staff.

Where the CEDT Social Worker has to deal with requests for emergency accommodation from the Local Authority, a brief assessment must be made over the telephone as certain criteria must be met for the person to be considered in 'priority need' and therefore eligible for help under the Housing Act 1985. The most important thing to check is that the person is actually homeless at the time of referral. People do present themselves when they are about to be thrown out or fear being thrown out by a landlord. These people need to be advised to go to stay in their accommodation (if safe to do so) and go to the Housing Needs office the next day. Others will have options of friends or relatives open to them and should be advised to use them. Where someone is actually homeless the LA has a duty to provide to those in 'priority need', temporary accommodation for up to 6 weeks to allow time for a thorough assessment of the person's situation and to make a decision about their eligibility for permanent accommodation.

**Vulnerability:** This is the main criteria to be established by the CEDT Social Worker. Children are automatically vulnerable so they and their parent/s or main carer are also automatically entitled to emergency temporary accommodation.

**Unintentionally Homeless:** Those who are intentionally homeless because of eviction due to non-payment of rent or anti-social/violent behaviour or who have a home somewhere but choose not to live in it are seen as intentionally homeless and therefore ineligible for LA help under the Housing Act. It is not always possible to get information to form a view about this but the person presenting as homeless should be asked why and how they have become homeless. This criterion is always thoroughly investigated by Housing staff during their 6 week assessment.

## CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES

**Local Connection:** This is less important outside of office hours as local authority Housing Departments have reciprocal agreements and procedures for managing requests for accommodation from people from other areas. However, those homeless people who spent last night in accommodation in a neighbouring authority should be encouraged to return there. Those with accommodation elsewhere but wanting to live in Sutton should be advised to go to their own LA Housing office to seek a transfer or to go to a Sutton Housing Needs office during normal office hours.

**Finding temporary accommodation:** For those thought to be in priority need the CEDT Social Worker can arrange accommodation in a Bed & Breakfast establishment. Only when this list is exhausted should we approach other hotels not on the list. Care must be taken regarding the likely behaviour of the homeless person and **those under the influence of drugs or alcohol should not be accommodated**. The council needs to retain the goodwill of hotel landlords.

It is essential to ask searching questions about the housing need, and to check whether relatives or friends can help out in the very short term. Where domestic violence is an issue it is procedure to refer to Women's Aid. A clear account of the reasons for deciding to offer accommodation is crucial.

If it seems there is no alternative but to find accommodation then several of the boroughs have provided information regarding B& B accommodation. When an establishment agrees to help then fax them a confirmation using the template called 'Resource' in the CEDT Templates section (File/New/CEDT Templates).

With the exception of breakfast, Housing will not pay for meals – if someone has absolutely no money for food, there may be a need to call out the Benefits Agency or consider whether Social Services should make a payment.

Fax a copy of the CEDT referral to the relevant Housing Dept, including a copy of the confirmation memo. Where it seems relevant, e.g. children involved, known user, fax to appropriate Children's Services or SCT.

### Homeless 16 & 17 Year Olds and Care Leavers

There is a duty under Section 24 of the Children Act 1989 to assist young people previously looked after. Where a young person over 16 years is in the 4 Borough's and is homeless for whatever reason, they should be assessed with regard to their current situation and vulnerability. 16-17 year olds without other accommodation options and in priority housing need defined by the Housing Act 1985 should be accommodated by the Housing Department.

If such a young person appears particularly vulnerable (e.g. learning difficulties, pregnant, unable to cope unaccompanied and unsupervised in Bed & Breakfast accommodation etc.) An assessment of their needs should be made and a judgement made as to whether they fall within the remit of the Children Act 1989. Young people, who meet 'child in need' criteria and require being looked after, may be accommodated by Children and Families under section 20 Children Act. Such decisions need the authority of the on-call manager.

## **CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES**

### **CEDT ROLE IN EMERGENCY PLANNING**

It is recognised that in a Borough Emergency the expertise of CEDT could be invaluable. It is further recognised that this might not be practical if

- The social worker is already involved with an emergency elsewhere in the borough.
- The social worker is covering an emergency in another borough
- There is only one social worker on call.

All contact with CEDT is through Sutton's Civic Security Officers or, in Richmond, through Careline call staff. The EPO, security or LALO may refer an incident to the CEDT worker. In the event of evacuation and/or the need to provide a rest centre the link officer for community services would be advised

The social worker on duty will need to assess

- Is the request appropriate to their role
- Would the request be better dealt with by the manager of the rest centre or the link officer for community services
- Is social work intervention needed immediately or could it be dealt with by day staff.

The social worker would bear in mind the following

- Any medical condition identified in an evacuation would be referred to the hospital
- Accommodation issues would be dealt with by appropriate care managers

The most likely areas of intervention would be mental health issues or child care issues.

### **NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS (I AM CURRENTLY CHECKING THIS IS ACCURATE)**

All adult asylum seekers should be referred directly to the National Asylum Support Service (NASS):

Out of Hours: 0870 2412942

### **YOUNG OFFENDERS**

Appropriate adult work has a low priority and should only be undertaken in specific circumstances

It is almost never appropriate to attend a Police station after midnight (the young person should be allowed to sleep and be questioned at a more suitable time) except for LAC.

For a Looked after child it is usually better for the foster carer or a family member to attend, but the social worker should attend instead if no-one known to the child is available. In cases where the parent is unable to act as appropriate adult (for example, s/he is the alleged victim) other relatives may still be suitable.

It may be necessary to ensure that the duty solicitor is present or has conducted an initial interview.



## CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES

The social worker should confirm that the Police have called the local scheme for the respective borough.

It should be noted that the area covered by Tooting Police Station is outside the boundaries of the four boroughs covered by this service. Often these young people do not live in the 4 boroughs.

In the event of attending as an appropriate adult, the AA guidelines should be consulted.

### Volunteer appropriate adult schemes

All four boroughs have a volunteer AA scheme operating for children and vulnerable adults. These all appear well organised at time of writing, but there are occasional gaps in the rotas supplied to the Custody Suites of the Police Stations. From the rotas supplied, Police seeking an appropriate adult are directed to call individual volunteers directly or a single number for the co-ordinator or a message giving details of who is available at that time.

Volunteer appropriate adult's are all given training on their role and are directed to contact CEDT outside office hours for assistance and matters falling outside their remit.

### KINGSTON

The RBK volunteer AA scheme is organised by the Kingston Advocacy Service tel. 8549 1028 email [rights@kag.org.uk](mailto:rights@kag.org.uk). Contact person Peter Pritchard. Police call RBK CCTV/security outside office hours who then contact volunteer on shift to call Police.

### MERTON

The Merton Appropriate Adult Scheme (MAAS) is organised by the Merton Youth Justice Service and operates between 08.00 and 23.00 seven days a week. Police call the dedicated MAAS phone – 07943 817361 which gives the name and contact phone number of who is on duty.

The current co-ordinator is Kelly Scott-James 8274 4949  
[Kelly.Scott-James@merton.gov.uk](mailto:Kelly.Scott-James@merton.gov.uk)

### RICHMOND

Their outside office hours scheme runs from 17.15 to 22.00 Monday to Friday, 09.00 to 22.00 Saturday and Sunday. Police contact the co-ordinator who liaises with person listed on rota.

Contact: Julie Martin tel. 8943 8194 [J.Martin@richmond.gov.uk](mailto:J.Martin@richmond.gov.uk)

### SUTTON

This service is organised by Sutton Volunteer Centre, current co-ordinator Teena Sloanes  
[tsloanes@suttonlea.org](mailto:tsloanes@suttonlea.org)

Service runs from 09.00 to 22.00 all year round. Outside office hours Police call individual volunteer appropriate adults from rota supplied to Custody suites.

### Saturday and Bank Holiday Youth Courts

## **CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES**

YOT have a rota of staff on-call to act as court officer for Saturday and bank holiday youth courts. The on-call court officer may need help and advice from the CEDT duty social worker if accommodation or other services are needed.

### **PACE, & Remands to Care**

Where a young person under 18 years old is likely to stay in a police station overnight, normally for Court the next day, the police should request a PACE (i.e. non-secure local authority accommodation for young offenders liable to be detained in police custody) bed. They more often request secure accommodation. The threshold however for use of secure accommodation is high, in that the young person must have committed a serious offence attracting a custodial sentence or have persistently absconded. Police are unlikely to release a young person into Children and Families foster care or a PACE bed where they have breached bail conditions. CEDT's view is that secure accommodation is not appropriate for them so they can by default end up staying in the Police station until the next available Court.

Court remands & remands to Secure Training Centres. From time to time we are asked to provide accommodation for a young person remanded by the Court into local authority care, and we become responsible for placing. The Court may remand a young person to a 'Secure Training Centre' (STC). In this case, the Court will be responsible for identifying a placement. We are responsible for providing transport (i.e. with an escort). We are expected to provide LAC Essential Information Form Part 1 and LAC Placement Plan Part 1, although the amount of information we will be able to provide on these forms will be limited.

### **Financial Assessments**

The Out of Hours Service does not undertake financial assessments although Service users need to be informed that this will be part of the full assessment undertaken by the day time team and that they may be charged for any emergency package of care dependent on their income.

### **Secure Accommodation**

Secure accommodation is an option for very few children using the Children Act 1989 Section 25 and the Children (Secure Accommodation) Regulations 1991. Restricting the liberty of a child, of any age, is a serious step and should only be used when it is a 'last resort' when all other options have been comprehensively considered and rejected because they do not meet the child's needs. The CEDT social worker must ascertain the wishes and feelings of the child, his parents and those with parental responsibility. If this is not possible the reasons must be recorded. The child's views must be recorded.

It is unlawful for the liberty of a child to be restricted unless one of these criteria is met. Consider the following criteria from section 25 of the Children Act:

- The child has a history of absconding and is likely to abscond from any other description of accommodation and if he absconds, he is likely to suffer significant harm;
- Or
- That if he/she is kept in any other description of accommodation he/she is likely to

## **CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM PROCEDURES**

injure himself or other persons.

The legal advisor can assist to decide whether the criteria are met and that secure accommodation is the only possible option to meet the needs of the child this should be recorded with the reasons.

For secure accommodation the duty social worker should seek authorisation from the On-call Manager, and if authorised, to contact the Secure Accommodation bed agency to see if they have a vacancy.

If the child is under 13 years, Regulation 4 states they can only be placed in secure accommodation with the prior approval of the Secretary of State. Prior to seeking approval a discussion should take place between the Department and the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI). Subject to their advice a formal submission can be made to the Secretary of State. Advice can be obtained from CSCI about the content required for this written submission.

For a child under 13 years a placement must be found before making a formal application to the Secretary of State for approval.

Authorisation without the approval of a court can only be made for a maximum of 72 hours in any one 28 day period. In certain circumstances this can be briefly extended, for example when the 72 hours falls on a public holiday. Legal advice should be obtained if this is the case.

All applications are heard in a magistrate's court (unless appealed) and the child should be prepared by the SW for the process.

Within 12 hours of placing a child in secure accommodation the child's SW must inform the parent/carer.

An order does not require the authority to continue the placement for the duration of the order or to continue the placement if the criteria on which the application was made cease to apply.