



**ISLE of
WIGHT
COUNCIL**

Isle of Wight Children's Services

SOCIAL SERVICES & HOUSING DIRECTORATE

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Absence from Work of Social Workers or Key Workers

Procedure for Managing

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ABSENCE FROM WORK OF SOCIAL WORKERS OR KEY WORKERS – PROCEDURE FOR MANAGING

This procedure aims to ensure that:

Directors of social services must ensure that when staff are absent from work, systems are in place to ensure that post, e-mails and telephone contacts are checked and actioned as necessary. (Laming Report's Recommendation 50).

This procedure should be read in conjunction with the council's attendance management policy and procedure.

1. Responsibilities of the team manager

1.1 Each team manager is responsible for ensuring that we have in place adequate cover arrangements that allow continuity of response, on behalf of a child, in the absence of the allocated social worker or key worker.

1.2 This requires that:

- i) Holidays are planned in advance and managed within the team so that cover is provided for the absent person's caseload to ensure that post, voice-mail, emails and telephone contacts are checked and actioned as necessary.
- ii) In the event of sickness the team manager or other nominated person checks post, voice-mail, emails and telephone contacts and informs the team and reception staff of this worker's absence.

2. Responsibilities of allocated social worker/key worker

2.1 The allocated social worker or key worker is responsible for ensuring that case records are routinely up to date prior to planned leave, that any contingency planning is recorded on both the file and the computer in the event of a crisis or a predictable outcome.

- 2.2 Prior to a period of leave the allocated social worker or key worker discusses with their line manager, in supervision, any actions routine or otherwise required on their cases during their absence. In conjunction with the team manager arrangements to cover these actions are agreed and recorded on the file.
- 2.3 The social worker or key worker prior to going on leave should:
- i) Ensure they have posted an “out of office” message on Outlook if they have access to emails.
 - ii) Change their voice mail message to indicate that they are on leave, when they are returning and who to contact in an emergency.
 - iii) Ensure that their leave is clearly recorded in the signing out book in reception.
- 2.4 It is the responsibility of the allocated social worker or key worker to check on their return all records on their cases and to discuss any actions and their consequences with their line manager and the workers who undertook actions in their absence.
- 2.5 It is the responsibility of any worker to inform their manager of any period of unplanned absence or sickness in line with the Attendance Management Policy.

3. Responsibilities of workers covering for an absent colleague

- 3.1 Agreement to cover a case planned or unplanned requires that the covering worker checks post, voice-mail, emails and telephone contacts in respect of that case and brings any issue of concern or action to the attention of the team manager.
- 3.2 Any actions undertaken on that case during the social worker or key workers absence is recorded on file and/or computer.
- 3.3 It is the responsibility of the covering worker to discuss any actions, and their consequences with the team manager as soon as is possible and with their colleague on their return.

4. Responsibilities of the team clerk

- 4.1 The team clerk has responsibility to alert the team manager or other nominated person of post, voice-mail, emails and telephone contacts that occur on cases where the allocated social worker or key worker is absent.

5. **Responsibilities of reception administrative staff**

- 5.1 Reception staff are responsible for noting staff leave as recorded in the signing in book, or sickness as notified by the team manager and then for ensuring that any callers are advised and passed to the appropriate/nominated person in that team.

- 5.2 If voice mail is used reception staff should advise the caller of the person's absence and ask them if their query can wait until the person's return. In the event that the caller does not wish to wait and indicates that the message is urgent then reception staff should endeavour either to pass the caller to the team manager or deputising manager or to take a message to pass on to them. It is the reception staff responsibility to ensure that that message is received by the relevant person and not lost in the system.