

Responsibility of professionals to share information when a Care Leaver Dies

From January 2024, local authorities should notify the Secretary of State for Education and Ofsted of the death of a care leaver aged up to their 25th birthday as per the revisions to Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023. Notifications should be made on all deaths regardless of the circumstances. Unlike other serious incident notifications, abuse or neglect does not need to be present to meet the criteria for notification.

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) will be responsible for making the notifications in Durham. All deaths should be reported to DSCP by email dscpsecure@durham.gov.uk providing relevant information. Depending on your role, you may be asked to complete a short form to assist with the notification.

Definitions

Not all children who have been cared for by the local authority will meet the criteria as a Care Leaver. A care leaver is anyone aged up to their 25th birthday and meets both of the following criteria:

- is no longer looked-after
- has been looked after for at least 13 weeks which began after they reached the age of 14 and ended after they reached the age of 16.

Care leavers are entitled to support from their Personal Adviser up to their 25th birthday. If a young person chooses not to take up support, the local authority may no longer be aware of a care leaver's whereabouts or circumstances (and therefore their death).

Therefore, it is important for all agencies who are aware of a Care Leaver who has died to make the notification unless satisfied that another agency has already done so.

Why should we notify the death of a Care Leaver

Understanding outcomes for our Care Leavers is really important. By understanding and learning from what happened we can make changes locally in Durham and nationally to prevent future deaths.

What happens next

Unlike other serious incident notifications there is no requirement for a Rapid Review or Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review to be completed. However the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership is committed to learning from the experiences of our Care Leavers and will always consider if there is any learning. Where necessary, a review meeting will be held with relevant practitioners and if learning is identified, the appropriate methodology will be used this may include completing a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review. Depending on the circumstances, it may be appropriate to work alongside the Safeguarding Adults Board to consider a Safeguarding Adults Review or Domestic Homicide Review.

Collecting Serious Incident Notification Data

It is important that all serious incidents that meet the criteria as outlined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 are notified, including those for the death of a care leaver. By submitting a notification, it will ensure that relevant learning from incidents is identified and fed back into the system to prevent future harm or death.

Support or Guidance

For further support or guidance please go to:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel guidance for safeguarding partners (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- Children Act 1989: transition to adulthood for care leavers - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Extending Personal Adviser support to age 25 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Care Leaver Deaths – Durham Local Procedure ([Local Resources](#))