Wakefield Home Visit Tips for Education staff.

It is essential that appropriate risk assessments and procedures are in place before undertaking home visits. Risk assessments should include any known factors about the pupil/parents and anyone else known to live in the household, including large dogs etc. Extra consideration should be given to any known hostility, complaints or grievances.

If you have a safer schools officer it will be worth consulting with them regarding any police markers on certain addresses etc.

In the unlikely event that little or no information is known, visits should take place with 2 members of staff.

* DSL’s should ideally carry out home visits as they have full safeguarding training and access to full safeguarding file. If DSLs cannot do visits, other roles may be authorised to do so, however appropriate, relevant information must be shared with staff carrying out the visit. The visiting staff member must understand confidentiality and that information should only be shared on a need to know basis. The visits must have a clear purpose.
* Consider the purpose of the visit, to see parents/carer with or without the child?
* Information about children and families on the school system must be kept up to date to allow other colleagues to access current information.
* Visits and outcomes MUST be recorded on school system, keeping up to date records is vital. Including time arrived and left. Make notes at the time or shortly afterwards.
* No personal information about a family/child should be taken off premises without secure protection.
* Have any concerns been expressed by other agencies regarding home visits to this property/family?
* Remember and refer to the Wakefield Neglect Toolkit.
* Ensure members of staff who may be making visits have a copy of the Dealing with Disclosures reminder card. (available on WSCP Safeguarding webpage)
* Contact the family and let them know you are coming – unless circumstances warrant otherwise.
* Two member of staff should carry out visits if deemed necessary.
* Carry your ID badge and ensure you show this clearly at the start of the visit.
* Ensure you only share information, including the purpose of visit, with the responsible adult who has Parental Responsibility, be clear on this is before the visit.
* Usual practice will be to not enter the home if parents/carers do not consent or are not present, unless in an emergency. If a child is home alone contact the DSL team for further advice.
* If deemed necessary and safe to enter the home, the child should be seen in a communal area of the house e.g. there are no usual or routine reasons to enter the child’s bedroom. Remember safer working practice of acting in an open and transparent manner.
* Carry a work mobile phone with you at all times, ensure this is switched on and charged. Personal numbers must not be shared with families/pupils. If you have to use your personal phone to contact families etc learn how to hide your number.
* Park your car in a well-lit area, reverse into any spaces to ensure a quick exit if required. Lock valuables in the boot. Consider if there is appropriate lighting e.g. during winter months.
* If entering a home ask for any dogs to be secured in a separate room if possible. If the member of staff feels unsafe they should leave immediately. In these circumstances consider the implications for the child and seek advice.
* Ensure exits are accessible if you are entering the property e.g. ask to keep the key in the door if it is locked after you have entered. Could you get out quickly if required?
* Make sure all staff know how make a referral to social care/police. In most circumstances this is after consultation with the DSL, unless in an emergency. (give consideration of DSL availability – do not delay any response)
* Agree a procedure at base if a member of staff does not return at the expected time. Ensure the base has up to date details for all staff making home visit including up to date contact number, car details and emergency contacts.
* Visiting staff must alert other staff/base where they are going and when to be expected back, if going home afterwards they MUST check out with a phone call. What is the procedure if they do not return? Is based manned at all times when visits happen?
* Agree a code phrase – if said on the phone, or between staff on the visit it means the person is requesting to leave immediately/needs urgent help – i.e. to call police.
* All staff represent the school so professionalism, code of conduct, appropriate dress and values and attitudes of the school apply at all times.
* Do not spend more time than necessary at the home. Be sympathetic, but remain neutral. Be discreet but assertive about the direction of any conversation; do not gossip about the school or staff. Ensure your tone is professional at all times.
* If you are threatened try to remain calm, and try to defuse the situation by saying you will need to leave to discuss with a senior manager back at school. Do not touch or turn your back on someone who is threatening.
* Ensure any incidents or situation of concern are discussed with manager as soon as possible.
* If you are giving lifts to parents/students ensure appropriate managers are aware and that best practice in the policy is followed with the appropriate risk assessments and car insurance etc in place.
* Are any emergency protocols tested periodically to ensure they operate well?

If anyone is in immediate danger contact police on 999.

Ensure MASH and Operation Encompass have your up to date out of office / DSL holiday contact details.