Dear colleague,

Our school is taking part in a pilot project of ‘Operation Encompass’. This short document is designed to tell you a little bit about what this is and what this means for our pupils and school community.

Operation Encompass is a partnership between Police and Schools aimed at supporting children who are impacted by domestic abuse. This initiative began in England a decade ago that has since been replicated in communities all across the UK. It is designed to help schools meet the needs of children after the Police have attended a domestic incident at their home. At its heart is the simple sharing of information between Police and Schools.

If the Police attend a Domestic Abuse incident, and one of our pupils is present, they will notify our school, usually at the start of the next working day. In practice this is a simple and short phone call, to a member of the school safeguarding team. This will enable our safeguarding team to provide appropriate and timely support for a child or young person who may have experienced trauma. Operation Encompass is about putting the needs of children first and providing school staff with the information we need to support these children. It is very important that if you are a staff member answering the telephone, that you ensure that all Operation Encompass calls are put through to the relevant staff without delay.

As you will already be aware, Children experiencing domestic abuse are negatively impacted by this exposure. Domestic abuse has been identified as an Adverse Childhood Experience and can lead to emotional, physical and psychological harm. Operation Encompass aims to mitigate this harm by enabling the provision of immediate support. This rapid provision of support within the school environment means children are better safeguarded against the short-, medium- and long-term effects of domestic abuse.

All Operation Encompass information is shared with school staff on a strictly need to know basis. This is the same as with existing child protection information. Following an Operation Encompass notification, a member of the safeguarding team may come to speak with the class teacher to share limited information about what has happened. Together you will form a plan to best support the child. This will mean different things depending on what the original incident was. At all times, the focus is on being trauma informed and supporting the child.

The eventual plan is for Operation Encompass to be operating in every policing district and school in Northern Ireland. However, to facilitate learning the 2nd pilot is being targeted at around 76 schools in the Newry, Mourne and South Down areas. This is a fantastic opportunity for our school to be involved at the very outset of Operation Encompass in Northern Ireland. **The 2nd stage of the pilot is due to go live on 1st February 2022.**

The pilot is being run under the umbrella of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland and is being coordinated by the Child Protection Support Service within the Education Authority. If you have any queries about Operation Encompass, please speak to our Designated Teacher for Child Protection [Mrs P Gollogly].

You also may wish to visit [www.operationencompass.org](http://www.operationencompass.org) or watch the following segment from the BBC’s Victoria Derbyshire show, which features Operation Encompass - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03y9r5h>. Please note this video contains content about domestic violence and abuse that some people may find upsetting.