Emergency Duty Team

Every night, every weekend, every bank holiday

All you need to know...
The Emergency Duty Team
- Information for Staff and Colleagues

The Emergency Duty Team is a joint service, operating in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.

We are one service Manager, 5 full time and 2 part time Level 3 Approved Social Workers.

**Hours of work**

Monday - Thursday
5 p.m. - 8.30 a.m.

Friday - Monday
16.30 p.m. - 8.30 a.m.

We work evenings, weekends, Bank Holidays, and Council extra-statutory days.

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**What do we do?**

The Emergency Duty Team operates out of hours i.e. whenever the Social Services Departments are closed. We are an emergency service, and this means:

- We ensure that an appropriately qualified Social Services Officer is available, at all times outside normal office hours, to decide on behalf of the Directors of Social Services, whether or not a Social Services input is necessary.

- We ensure that an officer is available to arrange that provision if practical.

- We ensure the Councils meet their statutory obligations, primarily by providing care and/or support where a person is assessed to be at risk if that cannot be dealt with without providing Social Services. The resources may be direct services, or commissioned services.

- We provide consultancy to current or potential service users, to colleagues and other agencies.

- We are a liaison point for access to other services that the Department operates beyond the normal working week. We are also, inevitably, a liaison point for other agencies e.g. the Benefits Agency, that don't have a public telephone contact number.

- We maintain information on children whose names are on the two Councils' Child Protection registers. Subject to agreed criteria, this information may be shared by other relevant agencies to help Child Protection investigations.
Get in touch...

Phone and Minicom 029 2044 8360

Mobile (for text messages ONLY) 0781 223 0073

Fax 029 2044 8363

Email edt@cardiff.gov.uk

NB: Only one of us is available to undertake visits to service users. How quickly we can respond depends on the number and priority of the emergencies we are assessing at the time. When the visiting social worker is out on an assessment investigation, the lead social worker continues to take enquiries.

Key Functions

The key statutory functions we may undertake are:

- We work within the principles of the 1989 Children Act, i.e. working in partnership and avoiding using legal powers whenever possible and safe (for the child) to do so.

- If we have to use legal powers, it is essential you give us the relevant background information. If we can't get this information, the legal application may not be approved.

- Sometimes children and/or young people may be abandoned or parents are prevented by circumstances or ill health from caring from them. If so, we will make enquiries, in consultation with those with parental responsibility if possible, to find out if there are any appropriate and available family or community resources for these children. If we can't find any we arrange for children to be accommodated under Section 20, 1989 Children Act. We will do all we can to ensure placements are appropriate for the child.

Protection of Vulnerable Adults

- A member of the EDT will assess vulnerable adults coming within the terms of reference of the 1983 Mental Health Act if we receive appropriate information. We are all approved under that Act. This means that following a referral we will carry out an approved social work assessment and complete an application under the 1983 Mental Health Act if appropriate.

- We will assess non-medical crises, affecting the elderly, the infirm or those with a disability or severe learning disability, if such crises are likely to place them in serious and immediate risk.

- We follow the All Wales Child Protection procedures for non-accidental injury and/or serious neglect of children.

- When we get a child protection referral we will liaise with all other relevant investigating agencies to ensure that a child or children are safe until a full investigation is possible.
Under powers and responsibilities from Community Care legislation, and the 1948 National Assistance Act, we will investigate, in consultation with service users and their carers, to ascertain the minimal, effective method of ensuring the continued well being of a vulnerable adult. We normally do this by providing or coordinating domiciliary and/or community resources, but we can arrange residential care as a last (appropriate) resort.

If an adult who is referred to us meets the South Wales Adult Protection (SWAP) forum POVA criteria, we will assess their immediate care and protection needs. Under the SWAP policy and procedures we will take steps to ensure their safety, including liaising with partner agencies.

**Existing Obligations**

- We will give advice concerning persons, child or adult, already in the care of the Councils, who come to the notice of other agencies.

**What are our Response Targets**

- The EDT will respond by phone immediately, and any advice and decision-making that we can give by phone, similarly will be immediate.

- For visiting, we can't guarantee a specific response time because at any one time we have only one visiting social worker. But we will respond to statutory emergencies that fall clearly within our remit by a visit, as soon as we have completed the essential liaison with other key personnel (e.g. Doctor, Police). As long as the EDT social worker is not engaged on another investigation, this can be immediate.

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**What we don't do**

It must be emphasised that the EDT's duties are limited to the Councils' statutory obligations and emergency situations that require social work intervention described above. Ultimately, the professional skill and judgment of the social services officer involved will determine whether we provide a (direct) service. The Service and the EDT in particular, has neither the legal authority nor the resources to assume prime responsibility for other key personal services issues, which may affect vulnerable people.

From the EDT point of view, the most significant of these and the relevant responsible agency are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Agency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health care needs</td>
<td>NHS Direct</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cardiff and Vale NHS Trust</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cardiff or Vale Local Health Boards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income Support</td>
<td>Benefits Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodation issues and homelessness</td>
<td>Cardiff or Vale Housing Department</td>
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<td>Public order/neighbour disputes</td>
<td>Police or Cardiff/Vale Housing Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problems with adult offenders</td>
<td>Probation Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public utilities e.g. water and fuel supply</td>
<td>Appropriate utilities supplier</td>
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In all of these, Social Services have no executive powers, but if we can and should we will advise and liaise.
Social Care Functions not covered by EDT

In addition, there are several areas of legitimate Social Services work that the EDT is not able to cover. This list below is not complete or definitive and is no particular order. That is not to say that we will never consider them, though obviously we have to give priority to our emergency work.

Return of absconders to residential or foster care

Carers are responsible for arranging the return of children in their care - this is good practice. An absence may often be a form of crisis that is better dealt with by someone with first hand knowledge of the child.

Spot Checks

These defy appropriate definition and cannot usefully be undertaken by staff that have no knowledge of the client. Also we cover such a wide geographical area we can't commit one staff member to a speculative visit.

Appropriate Adult Interviews

Providing an appropriate adult in certain situations is a requirement of the 1984 Police and Criminal Act. The Children's Services' Youth Offending Team organises and manages a rota of volunteers for this. We act as a contact point for the police when requesting an Appropriate Adult

The volunteers are trained to deal with young people in police stations but are not able to provide this service for adults whom the police believe to come within the terms of reference of the Act. At present those who are mentally ill or have learning disabilities have no service equivalent to the Appropriate Adult Volunteer Scheme out of hours.

Taking over on-going work from daytime colleagues

If work on an emergency has started during office hours the staff involved must finish the work and not pass it on to the EDT. Of course this works both ways; we will finish work that we've started outside office hours before we pass it on to the regular teams.

Work outside the boundaries of the two joint initiative authorities

We cannot commit the duty worker to visits outside Cardiff and the Vale even for Cardiff and Vale service users. We advise and where appropriate, underwrite and authorise actions taken concerning people we have a clear statutory duty for.

Work with clients who are the statutory responsibility of other social services departments

We will not normally make decisions about out-of-county service users who turn up within our area, without consulting the relevant authorities. We will take the appropriate protective action where we have a clear duty to do so, wherever that person lives.
Helping us by sharing your information

We are always aware that if we have less information and do not have established working relationships with service users we will not be able to make decisions as well as our colleagues could.

We therefore try to intervene in the least obtrusive manner possible. We try to stabilise situations until the relevant responsible daytime workers can deal them in a properly planned manner with access to the full range of support services.

So, when you liaise with us remember:

- Yours may be the only information we have available.
- Please provide as much relevant history or evidence as you can in support of a recommended course of action. This is particular significant where we might have to consider legal steps.
- Please identify any resources available that might help resolve problems you think are likely. Tell us what you might have prepared or planned as the best way forward for a particular service user e.g. has he or she been prepared (e.g. already visited or stayed in a resource where they may best settle in an emergency?). Have you identified alternative local and/or community resources?
- As there is only one visiting social worker should he or she ask for support from the police, for example?

Counselling

We have only one phone line and we mustn't let it be blocked unnecessarily. So we can't provide a counselling service. We will try to redirect people looking for counselling to other agencies.

Admission to nursing homes

The EDT has considerable delegated powers to arrange community care but we are not authorised to arrange admission to a nursing home, unless the case manager has anticipated this and given us authority.

Making decisions

Finally, if we make a decision not to visit in response to any referral, we will be willing to explain why and how that decision was reached and how the caller may find a satisfactory alternative way of resolving the problem(s).

This leaflet is a description of the Emergency Duty Team's work. It is for anyone interested in knowing about the provision of Social Care services outside the normal working day. As well as the EDT there are many services operating over 24 hours. The EDT needs and wishes to liaise effectively with them as well as with our daytime colleagues in Social Care.

The EDT is always keen to promote good social work practice in emergency situations. However, because of our staffing and resource restraints we must define "emergency" rigorously.
The Emergency Duty Team

When sending us alerts about service users, please use (internal) email whenever possible. Please put the name, ID number or DOB and address on the subject line to enable us to access the information.

Email: edt@cardiff.gov.uk

And finally…

EDT staff are well qualified and highly experienced social workers. We are keen to improve the professional service the department offers, and it would help our evaluation of our team's work, if you would tell us what the outcomes are of any actions we take.

Please help us to help you

Last printed: January 2006

Photos from
www.JohnBirdsall.co.uk