

News story: Funding boost to help pupils affected by domestic abuse

The Home Office has today (Friday 21 September) awarded charity Operation Encompass £163,000 for its vital initiative to support children who attend school following a domestic abuse incident.

Operation Encompass is a system which ensures the police contact a school before the next school day when one of their pupils has been exposed to domestic abuse.

This allows a school's safeguarding team to make sure the appropriate support is in place to give the pupil the assistance they need.

The simple, yet highly effective, scheme is the brainchild of headteacher Elisabeth Carney-Haworth and husband David, a former police officer.

Elisabeth, the headteacher of Torpoint Nursery and Infant School in Cornwall said:

Imagine arriving at school after hearing or witnessing domestic abuse – you have not slept, had no breakfast, don't have all your school uniform and your home is in disarray. Now you are expected to sit in your classroom and learn.

This is happening in our schools every day and the current procedures in many police forces do not allow for the reporting to schools of domestic abuse incidents in a timely fashion.

This funding from the Home Office will assist in ensuring that Operation Encompass is embraced fully by all police forces and that the partnership between the police and schools will enable them to work towards providing trauma-informed support.

David, a former police sergeant at Devon and Cornwall Police, added:

We know if you are a child exposed to domestic abuse then you will suffer emotional and psychological harm and it will have negative consequences on their health, education and wellbeing.

This funding will help make sure Operation Encompass will be in every force, in every school, for every child. Our children deserve no less.

The scheme currently operates in some form in 33 forces in England and Wales.

The funding will support the rollout of the initiative to all forces and

allow Operation Encompass to carry out an audit of existing systems and the effectiveness of the supportive interventions in place for children.

Statistics have found that as many as 1 in 5 children in the UK are witness to or exposed to domestic abuse and those affected by this horrible crime are 4 times more likely to go on and experience or perpetrate domestic abuse later in life.

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability Victoria Atkins said:

I am so proud to award funding to this vital initiative. The passion David and Elisabeth have shown in developing Operation Encompass is inspiring and demonstrates how such a simple solution can support so many children.

It is heartbreaking to think that a child's education is suffering through no fault of their own. By police and schools having this system in place we can ensure these youngsters have the immediate support they need.

This shows the government's commitment to providing help to children affected by domestic abuse and we will build on this as we introduce the draft Domestic Abuse Bill.

The funding is the latest in a series of steps the government has taken to transform the way we respond to domestic abuse, and specifically support children. In July, the Home Office launched an £8 million fund for projects designed to intervene early to help children who have been directly or indirectly affected by domestic abuse.

This comes ahead of the draft Domestic Abuse Bill, which will be published later this session. More than 3,200 people responded to the domestic abuse consultation, which includes measures such as introducing a new statutory definition of domestic abuse, new domestic abuse protection orders, and the creation of a domestic abuse commissioner.