

OPERATION ENCOMPASS

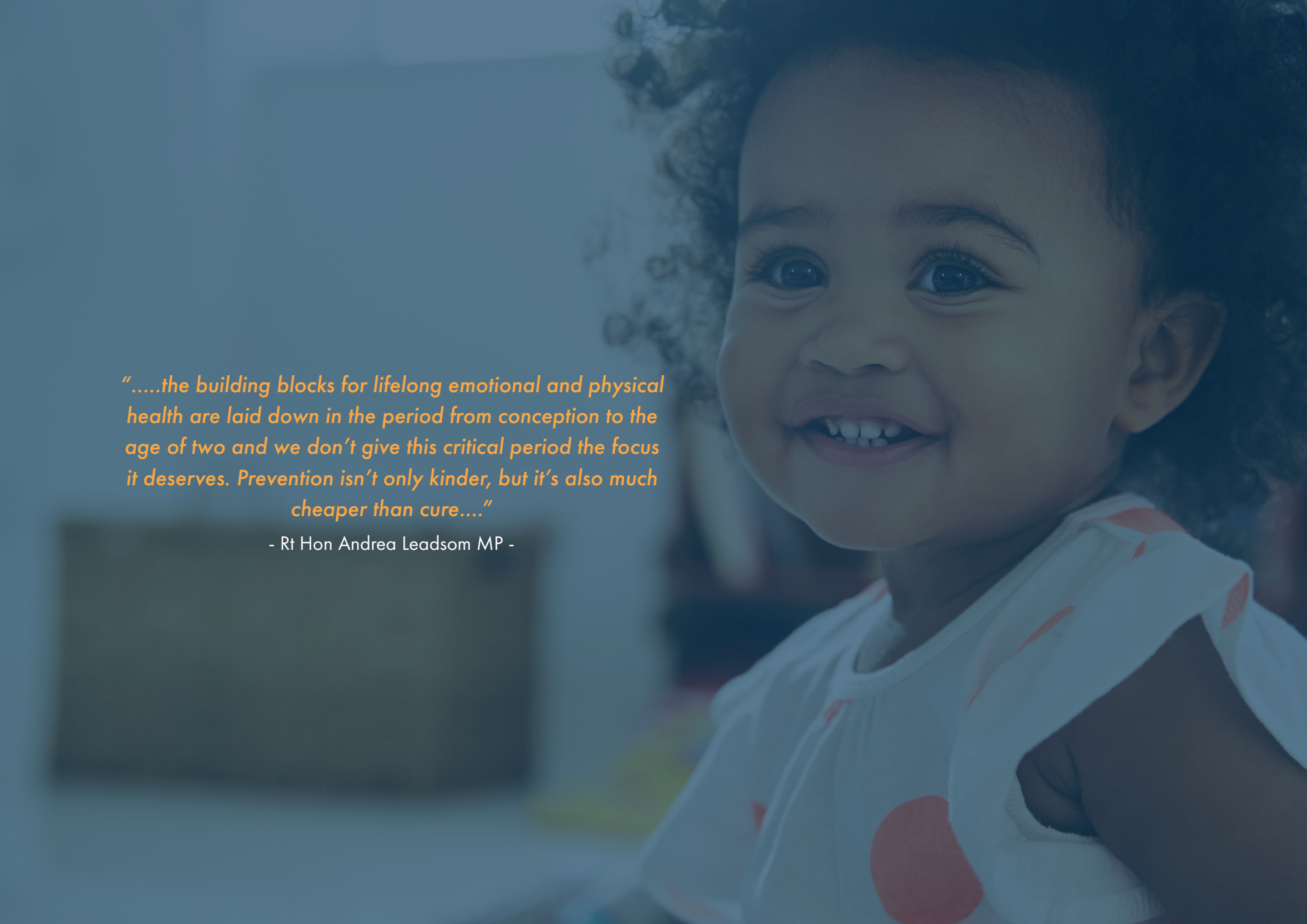
Operation Encompass and Early Years Information Sharing: a vital step in supporting children experiencing domestic abuse

Police and Early Years' Settings

"Operation Encompass is an innovative scheme that recognises the important principle that children who experience the devastating effects of domestic abuse are victims in their own right. The scheme has enabled vital information-sharing between police and schools to support children for over 10 years and I am so pleased that the expansion of the scheme into early years sharing information directly will ensure that the youngest children are also safeguarded."

Safeguarding Minister 2022

Updated March 2026



"…..the building blocks for lifelong emotional and physical health are laid down in the period from conception to the age of two and we don't give this critical period the focus it deserves. Prevention isn't only kinder, but it's also much cheaper than cure…."

- Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP -

Many police forces have, through Operation Encompass, developed an understanding of the incredibly important information that they hold about children experiencing domestic abuse and the responsibility upon them to share this information with those who can make a difference to these children.

All forces should now be in a position to share information about the very youngest and most vulnerable of our children who are not yet attending school, college, or other educational establishment.

Many police forces are already sharing this information, Operation Encompass is keen to ensure that all children experiencing domestic abuse are supported and have been working to ensure that this is in place across all forces. Legislation has been enacted which places a legal requirement upon police forces to share this information. Sec 49b of the DA Act 2021.



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Children are victims of domestic abuse in their own right

Through Operation Encompass, information is currently shared by the police with schools and colleges regarding children up to the age of 18 years.

This is now being extended to sharing information from 28 weeks of pregnancy through to early years children aged 0-5 years.

This means that ALL children will be able to be supported through Operation Encompass from 28 weeks of pregnancy through to 18 years of age.

This information sharing should follow the same principles as current Operation Encompass notifications:

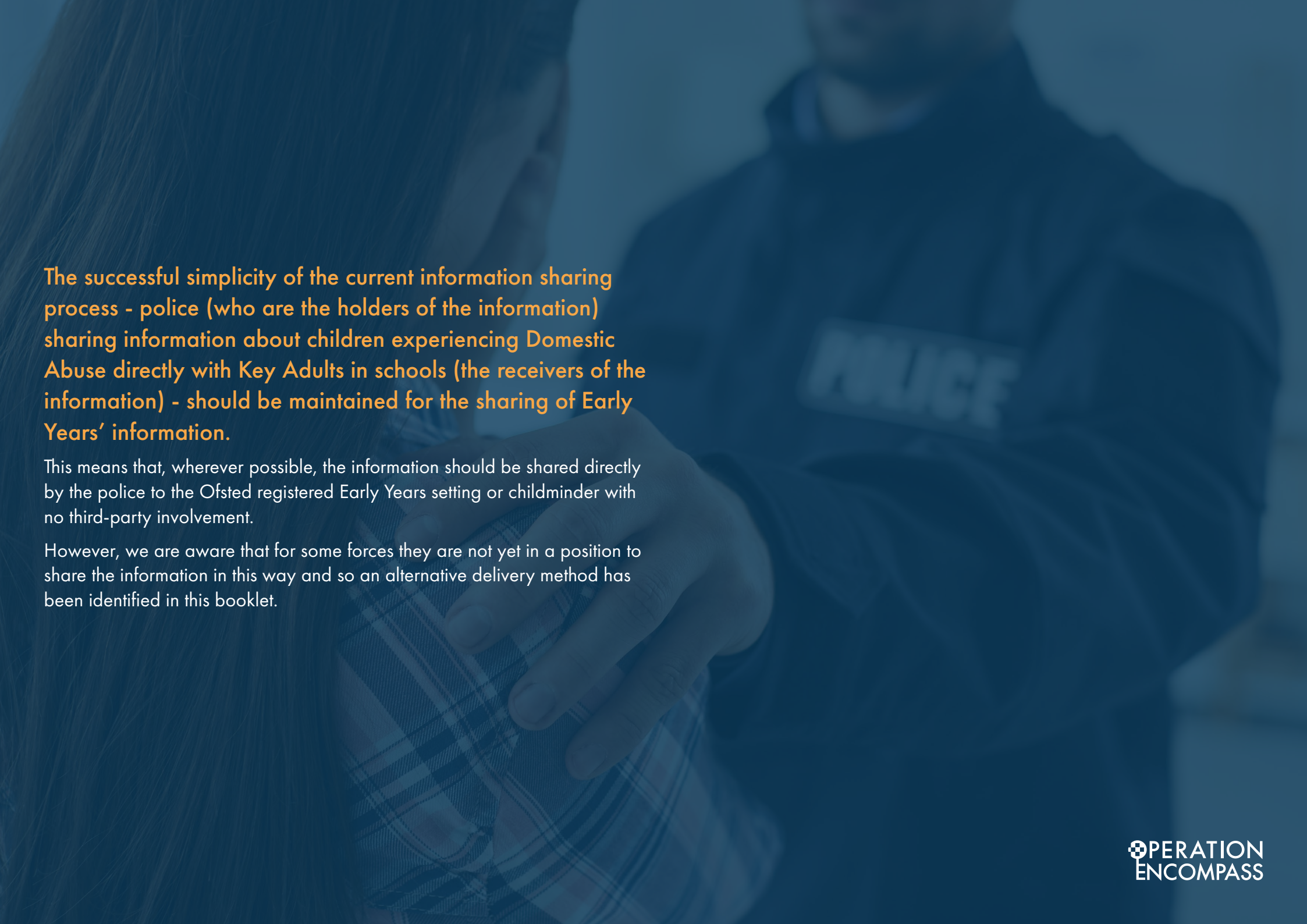
- ALL domestic Abuse incidents.
- Delivered as soon as possible on the next day (school/college notifications are prior to the start of the school day e.g. 8.30am at the latest).
- Context of the domestic abuse incident shared including the Voice of the Child.



"There is a wealth of evidence that poor mental health, drug and alcohol dependency and domestic abuse amongst parents and carers lead to significantly poorer outcomes for babies and young children."

- The Best Start for Life: The Early Years Healthy Development Review Report 2021 -

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The successful simplicity of the current information sharing process - police (who are the holders of the information) sharing information about children experiencing Domestic Abuse directly with Key Adults in schools (the receivers of the information) - should be maintained for the sharing of Early Years' information.

This means that, wherever possible, the information should be shared directly by the police to the Ofsted registered Early Years setting or childminder with no third-party involvement.

However, we are aware that for some forces they are not yet in a position to share the information in this way and so an alternative delivery method has been identified in this booklet.

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Why information sharing is so important

We are mindful that, as research has clearly demonstrated that Domestic Abuse can have an even more devastating effect upon very young children, there is a requirement to identify the most effective, secure, sustainable, simple yet safe way in which all police forces could share this information with the right people to make a difference.

Identifying who this 'right person' might be and how that process should work has been fundamental to our thought process.

- Children aged 0 to 5 years of age may be attending a wide range of settings (play group, pre-school, child minder, private nursery).
- They may attend at more than one of these settings and their pattern of attendance may vary widely.
- These children may not be attending any setting outside their home.

This is why notifications must also go to the Health Visitor[1] as well as the Key Adult in an Early Years' setting, where attendance at such a setting is known.

Only informing the Early Years' settings and Childminders would not capture ALL children experiencing domestic abuse and who have the right to support and nurture, many of the most vulnerable would still be missed.



"the best interventions and support arises from the timeliness (of the information sharing) -the earlier the better"

- Police/Health participant in Early Years Pilot -

1 Most police forces already share High Risk domestic abuse incidents with Health Visitors, our process expands this to notifying them about ALL incidents, regardless of adult risk assessment.

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Home Office: Operation Encompass Process Evaluation - Nov 2025[2]

"Health Visitors, nursery managers, and Local Authority Early Years practitioners reported that Early Years Operation Encompass increased their awareness of children affected by domestic abuse; this was supported by the Health Visitor child health records analysis;

*The analysis found that in **62%** of the EY Operation Encompass notifications examined in 3 areas, there was **no prior record** of **domestic abuse.***

Senior police officers, health visitor service leads and Local Authority Early Years leads reported new and effective working relationships; these included new multi-agency EY Operation Encompass partnerships that had not previously existed."

2 Operation Encompass Process Evaluation

The Early Years'[3] Key Adult Must:

- Undertake the National free Online Operation Encompass Training.
- Adhere to all requirements of school Key Adults.
- Be the DSL for the setting.
- Provide the Police with a secure email, or other electronic method of receiving the notification that can only be accessed by the DSL, or their Deputy, if this is the method the police choose to use.[4]
- Assure the police that the content of the notifications will be securely stored in line with all other CP information.
- Do nothing that places the adult or child victims at risk.



3 Including childminders.

4 The police may, for operational, security and capacity reasons, take the decision to share the Early Years' safeguarding information with the Local Authority Early Years' Services who will in turn share information with the setting.

The Health Visitor Role

The role of the Health Visitor[5] has been identified as pivotal within the information sharing process relating to our youngest children:

- The Health Visitor is allocated at 28 weeks of pregnancy through to 5 years of age.
- Every Health Visitor is trained in safeguarding and child protection to the same level as a Designated Safeguarding Lead/professional in a school, this means the police can have confidence that the information they are sharing will be treated in the correct manner. An important aspect of their role profile is the safeguarding and protection of children.
- Every Early Years' setting has a named Health Visitor.
- Health Visitors have access to secure electronic information sharing systems.
- When the child reaches 5 years of age the Health Visitor will transfer responsibility to a School Nurse who is well placed to continue to support the child within the school setting, where Operation Encompass will be working in its original format.
- Midwives share information regarding domestic abuse, as part of the hand over to Health Visitors.

"These children can be exposed to a cocktail of secondary risks - lack of food in the house, cramped living conditions or neglect, domestic violence, substance abuse and parental mental health problems.

At a time of unprecedented pressure on the services which are there to protect children, it is more important than ever that every tool is used to identify and help those who are most at risk."[6]

5 Health Visitor: Usually a trained Nurse or Midwife

6 Children's Commissioner

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Why also use the Heath Visitor Route for Operation Encompass Early Years' Notifications: Extracts from "*Why Health Visitors Matter*"

"Health visitors are skilled professionals with the expertise to work with families.

In the UK, we are lucky to have specialist community public health nurses - health visitors - with the expertise to provide care to families in the earliest years of their child's life. Heath visitors are trained and skilled in reaching out to families; searching for and understanding their health and care needs; offering support and intervention, and brokering engagement with other services.

Children aged two and under are the most vulnerable of all our children. They are also the least likely to have engagement with public services. 35% of all serious incident notifications involve serious harm to babies, yet up to 50% of babies who experience non-accidental injuries are not known to children's social care before the incident. Children under two are not at school and many are not in early education or childcare. Even before the pandemic, less than 40% of children aged two and under were in formal childcare (and only 11% of those under one). This means that (aside from GPs) health visitors are often the only professionals who have contact with young children and their families. Without effective health visiting services, many vulnerable children are at risk of falling through the gaps."



"Health visitors are the ears and eyes on the ground. From just before the baby is born, they've got the history, knowledge, the relationship with that family, to support that baby and child's health needs from a very early point"

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The method of information sharing as explained here is a sustainable model for the Police, the NHS and Health Visitors. Most importantly it will protect the most vulnerable of our youngest children experiencing Domestic Abuse in their homes.

These children have no voice. It is our responsibility to ensure that we give them all the support and nurture that they need.

Elective Home Education:
Police inform Children's Social Care
and Local Authority Responsible Officer

In School or college,
2-18 Years

Information to
Police Notification Team

School Key Adult Informed
Prior to Start of School Day

Key Adult Shares
Information with Key Staff

Police Attended
Domestic Abuse Incident

Children related
to either adult

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Not In School,
28 weeks pregnant
and 0-5 Years

Information
to Police
Notification Team

Information Shared
with each LA Early
Years' Team or
directly to the Key
Adult in the Early
Years' Setting

Information Shared
with one central Health
Visitor Portal for each
LA Area

Child's Health
Visitor and Early
Years' Setting
Informed same day

All children (0-18yrs) experiencing Domestic Abuse are given appropriate support

Police Force

As with Operation Encompass, forces should record data about notifications to Health Visitors and Early Years' settings and child care :

- Numbers of notifications sent
- Numbers of children within these notifications

Key Adult in Setting

The Key Adult should follow the guidance for Key Adults in schools, available in the free online National Operation Encompass Training and in the Handbooks and Guides on the Operation Encompass website.

Health Visitor:

There are a range of actions which a Heath Visitor make take (this list is not exhaustive):

- Visit the home (unscheduled visit)
- Visit the home (scheduled visit)
- Speak to the non-abusive parent (only if safe) about Domestic Abuse
- Provide contacts for DA support to non-abusive parent e.g. local DA services, National Helpline.
- Contact with adult victim's GP
- Contact Midwife if adult victim/perpetrator is pregnant
- Contact PVI /LA Nursery if one attended and known
- Contact /refer to Early Help
- Contact/refer to Social care
- Contact Police if additional information is known that increases the risk to either the adult or child victims or further information is required.





"Operation Encompass is widely recognised as a valuable safeguarding initiative, helping schools and early years settings provide support to children following domestic abuse incidents.[7]"

"Younger and unborn children are particularly vulnerable... and early years settings are often excluded from protective measures like Operation Encompass.[8]"

The Government's Healthy Child Programme 2026 supports the role of Health Visitors in the safeguarding and domestic abuse arena.

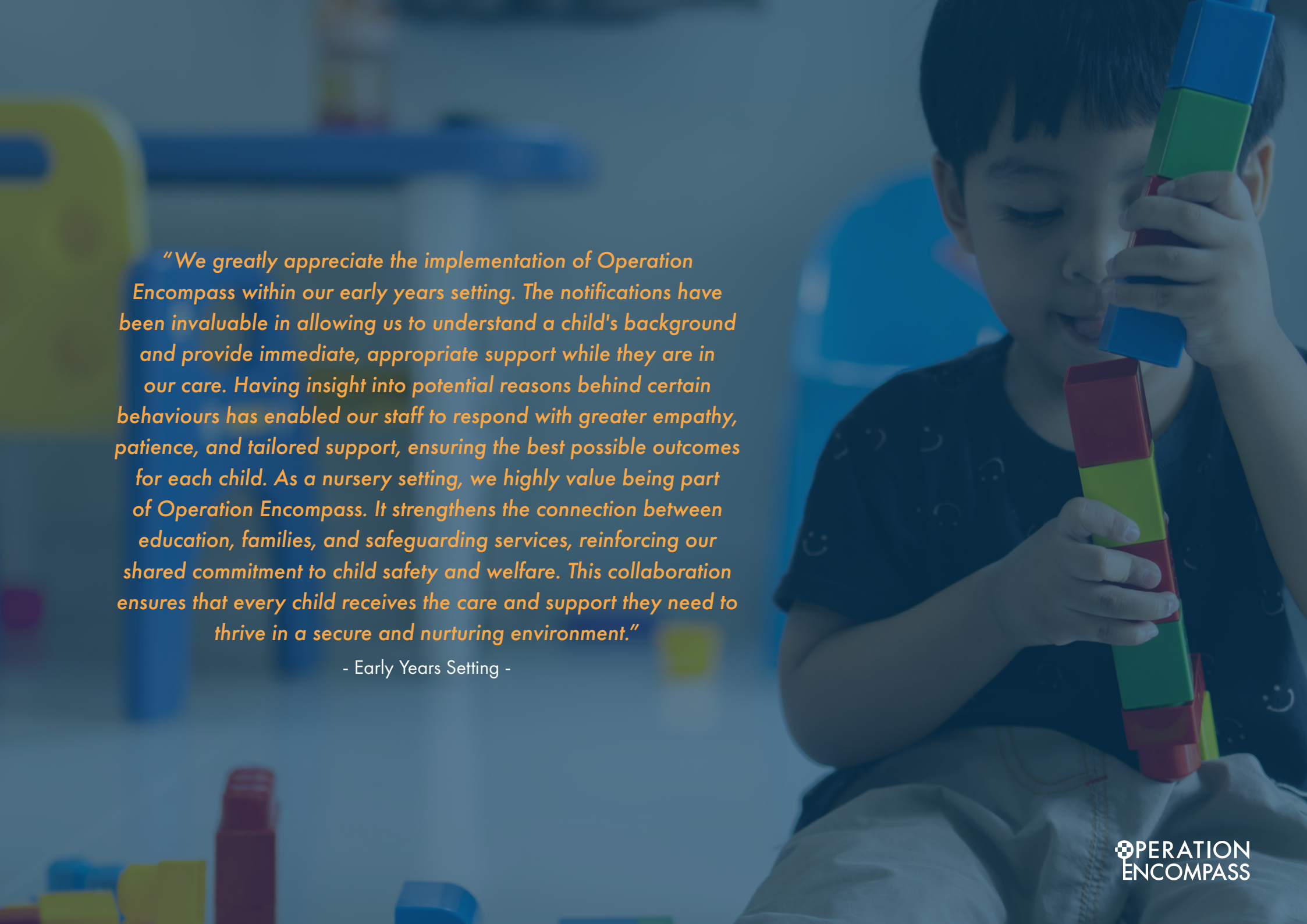
"this means that we can intervene earlier in a child's life"

- Police/Health participant in Early Years Pilot -

7 Multi Agency Response to Children as Victims in Law

8 Ibid

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"We greatly appreciate the implementation of Operation Encompass within our early years setting. The notifications have been invaluable in allowing us to understand a child's background and provide immediate, appropriate support while they are in our care. Having insight into potential reasons behind certain behaviours has enabled our staff to respond with greater empathy, patience, and tailored support, ensuring the best possible outcomes for each child. As a nursery setting, we highly value being part of Operation Encompass. It strengthens the connection between education, families, and safeguarding services, reinforcing our shared commitment to child safety and welfare. This collaboration ensures that every child receives the care and support they need to thrive in a secure and nurturing environment."

- Early Years Setting -

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"I would like to say that we are extremely glad that we receive notifications for our EYFS children. It is vital that such information is shared so we can safeguard all of our children. When we receive a notification for any of our children, we follow this up by doing a voice of the child. The children are also monitored for a period of time (eg. half a term) and discussed at our weekly safeguarding and wellbeing team meetings. Doing this enables us to decide on ending monitoring, extending the period of monitoring or maybe whether another type of support is needed to help that child."

- Early Years Setting -

"Operation encompass for early years is vital for practitioners to support children who may be involved in domestic violence. We have noticed changes in behaviour after an incident has happened. And without knowing a situation had occurred the child's behaviour could be handled differently. Thank you for stepping out for the Early years sector and including us."

- Early Years Setting -

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Children's lives matter.

"this is making us ensure that we are delivering in the best way to meet the needs of our families and children"

- Police/Health participant
in Early Years Pilot -

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Support

Operation Encompass will provide support for police forces during the implementation of this scheme. Please contact us: info@operationencompass.org

The Operation Encompass free online Key Adult training[9] has specific Early Years information and can be undertaken by all Health Visitors and all Early Years settings in your force area.[10]

Handbooks on the Operation Encompass website offer guidance for professionals with how to support children after receiving the notification. www.operationencompass.org

The free Operation Encompass Advice and Helpline is available for all Health Visitors and Early Years' professionals.

Key Contacts:

Operation Encompass:

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email: info@operationencompass.org



9 www.operationencompass.org

10 All participants receive a certificate on completion

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