

<b>TOPIC:</b> Broadmoor School Cascade	<b>DATE:</b> 18 December 2014
<b>OWNER:</b> Janette Karklins, Director CYPL	
<b>CONTEXT</b>	
<p>Broadmoor Hospital is reviewing whether to continue the coverage of their warning sirens, citing the Schools Cascade as being a robust system as a mitigating measure.</p> <p>At the Overview and Scrutiny Commission meeting on 22 October concern was expressed about the effectiveness of the Broadmoor schools cascade system. It was also suggested that a text messaging or email system would be a quicker method of disseminating information.</p>	
<b>KEY ISSUES:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The absolute necessity of a robust warning system in the event of an escape from Broadmoor Hospital.</li> <li>The robustness of the Schools Cascade system.</li> <li>The robustness of a text messaging or email warning system.</li> </ul>	
<b>KEY METRICS/OUTCOMES:</b> <p><u>The Effectiveness of the Cascade</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Broadmoor Cascade is initiated by Broadmoor Hospital in the event of an escape to alert all Berkshire schools as far as Winnersh Primary in Wokingham and Windsor Boys in Windsor &amp; Maidenhead, by cascading the information from school to school. The cascade works by one school telephoning another on a pre-set list.</li> <li>The cascade system is supposed to be routinely tested every second Wednesday of each term by Broadmoor Hospital. The cascade has run successfully for many years however during 2014 the Hospital has not initiated any cascades (until reminded to do so in September by BFC). It is believed that this was an oversight caused by a change in staffing. BFC have sought assurances from Broadmoor that they want to continue with the cascade.</li> <li>CYPL have this term made arrangements with Forestcare that regardless of the hospitals input that Forestcare will initiate the cascades termly. The Autumn term cascade will be on the second Wednesday of the term and there will also be unannounced cascades for the Spring and Summer terms.</li> <li>Forestcare will, also contact the non-school service heads within CYPL (e.g. Youth Service, Children's Social Care etc.) for them to initiate their own emergency procedures for their service.</li> <li>A feature of the cascade is that if a school cannot get through to the next school after several attempts they pass the message to the following school on the cascade and contact Forestcare. In the case of a real escape Forestcare would notify the police of the schools not responding.</li> </ul>	

### Options for Cascading Information

There are 3 options for cascading information, all with pros and cons.

**OPTION 1:** The current telephone system takes approx. 30 minutes and confirms receipt of message. However phones could be blocked in a real emergency.

**OPTION 2:** An email with a confirmation read receipt could be sent along with the telephone cascade. Generic email groups for headteachers and school secretaries are already set up and it would only require one email to be sent out i.e. this is a single email to all schools not a cascade between schools. During the school day emails are the main form of communication with schools.

All schools have signed up to the Simms Administration SLA which provides a helpdesk and technicians to resolve any problems.

There are times when the broadband is down or schools experience problems with receiving email, recently there was a problem with Group emails which meant that schools had to be emailed individually. It is also a misconception that emails are instantaneous. Emails can be held up and affected by power cuts and outages.

A receipt reply is not always an indicator that someone has received and actioned the email, and of course some people may not open their emails for some time. This option on its own would be insufficient.

**OPTION 3:** Texting and messaging is a possibility however schools are not yet in a position to receive this technology. Texting/messaging is direct to an individual/telephone and schools do not have a designated school mobile phone and a policy that ensures that the phone is charged, monitored, not on silent and remains on the school site.

This form of communication uses up less data than voice messages and is more reliable getting across the mobile network however if there was a major incident the network could be flooded and go down. Again not all people may open and read their texts.

There is also the issue of which network provider to use and black spot areas.

This option is not currently viable and on its own would be insufficient

The issue of texting and messaging and new procedure will be discussed with school secretaries at their termly meeting at the end of January.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS IMPLEMENTED**

As a result of concerns raised regarding the effectiveness of the current cascade Caroline Moore convened a small group of officers including representatives and Forestcare, the Emergency Planning Officer, the Community Safety Manager have met to discuss the way forward and implement improvements.

Consequently:

- Broadmoor Hospital has provided assurance that they will continue to implement the cascade on a termly basis.

- The extent of the cascade system will be reduced and will only include schools within the Borough. Forestcare will continue to pass the cascade to the neighbouring boroughs who will be responsible for disseminating information to their own schools.
- Forestcare will continue to manage and monitor the cascade via the current telephone arrangement. This will be supported by an email circulation with the read receipt function. It was agreed to continue with the telephone system and run the email system alongside it. This should capture the majority of the schools. Forestcare would be able to follow up those schools who have not responded quickly. Forestcare would also use the mobile numbers on the keyholder list for non-responsive schools.
- The cascade system will be broadened with a view to being used as a system for the dissemination of any emergency information.
- Assessment of the corporate approach to text messaging systems is being taken forward by the Emergency Planning Officer.
- Training with regards to the above and changes to be circulated via the secretaries' forum in the New Year.

#### **FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- A formal report should be drawn up for approval by DMT.