



South Gloucestershire Children's Partnership

Briefing Note - When I am out of the office

Background – A recent Serious Case Review in South Gloucestershire highlighted some learning for practitioners about risk associated with electronic working and in particular when a practitioner is out of the office, whether this is planned (a holiday) or unplanned (sickness).

You can see more about this Serious Case Review [here](#)

What does this mean for me?



There should always be an out of office on your email account if you are not able to read and act on your messages. If you go on holiday you should set an out of office which clearly states what the cover arrangements are for your post while you are away. If you are unexpectedly absent, you or your manager should ensure an out of office is added to your email as a priority.

Learning from the SCR was that a practitioner from another local authority sent information by email about a child and assumed the information had been received and acted on, because there was no indication the recipient was not in work, when in fact this was never seen.

What else did we learn?



We now rely on email for so much communication between our colleagues and partners in other agencies. As practitioners we know the work that has taken place and the information that has been shared. Our email communication about children and families should always be reflected in our record keeping, so this can be seen by others who access the records.

Learning from the SCR was that the record for a child showed that some statutory work had not taken place and the correct information had not been shared. The records had big gaps. The review uncovered that actually much of the expected had taken place at the right time, but this had been stored in a practitioners email trail rather than being transferred to the child's record. When the practitioner was not there, other workers were unable to work in an informed way to best support the child, because the records were incomplete.