

Safeguarding Early Adopters programme

Learning Example

Early Adopter: Solihull

Learning theme: Aligning procedures across neighbouring areas, for the benefit of practitioners.

Introduction and approach

The new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements present an opportunity to more closely align procedures across neighbouring local authority areas.

In the West Midlands, a number of areas have compared their various procedures, to consider those that could be shared, those which require further deliberation, and those where distinct procedures should be maintained.

To do so, a coding system was developed to denote the level of similarity between procedures. A series of recommendations were then made on the basis of this coding:

- Procedures coded as the highest level of similarity to be shared between areas immediately;
- Procedures coded as the second highest level of similarity: prioritise converting to shared procedures;
- Procedures coded as the third highest level of similarity to be reviewed over a longer period of time with distinct procedures to be retained in the interim;
- Procedures coded at the lowest level of similarity to remain distinct.

As an example, it was found that across all areas the procedures around safeguarding children from abroad mirrored each other although they were structured slightly differently. As such, it was possible to have one shared procedure across areas.

Where there were procedures in operation in one area with no equivalent in others, it was recommended that they were reviewed to decide if they were redundant. If not, they would be retained.

Through the review process, certain procedures were found to be outdated. In this case, where other area procedures were up-to-date, they were adopted. In cases where all area procedures were out of date, these needed to be re-written in an agreed manner.

Conclusion

It may be helpful to use the opportunity of introducing new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements as a way of more closely aligning procedures across neighbouring areas. The approach described allows for areas to maintain their own procedures where appropriate and relevant (and as such a local approach is not lost). Where practical,

however, procedures can be shared, consolidated and amalgamated. This should help to support practitioners who may work across local authority areas.

Partners will need to consider who leads on this work as it requires some resource. In this case, decision-making was delegated to a sub-group which meant that the burden on the executive was limited.