

Early Adopter: Berkshire West

Learning theme: Engagement with schools

Introduction

Consultation on proposed S175 Safeguarding Self-Assessment Process for Berkshire West Schools.

Background, aims and objectives

In response to the changes in the Children and Social Work Act 2017, Berkshire West LSCB partners are part of a national pilot programme to change and adapt their strategic partnership arrangements to reflect new national expectations. The first step in this process was to merge Reading, Wokingham and West Berkshire LSCBs together into one overarching Board.

The engagement and contribution of schools is a real strength and directly contributes to keeping children safer in the Berkshire West LSCB structure, and sustaining this in the transition is key.

To support this, Education Safeguarding Groups will be established in the Reading and Wokingham areas, led by schools, mirroring a prior arrangement in the West Berkshire area which has been slightly expanded. In addition, schools' engagement with and voice on Quality and Performance sub-groups that will provide crucial resources to fulfil the 'Independent Scrutiny' and quality assurance functions, is being strengthened.

Local Authority education leaders (with statutory accountability) have been asked to consider how S175/S11 self-assessment processes can be adapted within this context. We need the view and experience of School Leaders in Wokingham, Reading and West Berkshire to shape and inform this planning.

Approach

The proposals

1. **NSPCC accessible tool** - That S175 self-assessment is made as accessible as possible. The NSPCC tool already used by Wokingham schools lends itself to this. It is proposed that we use this tool, because feedback from school leaders is that the tool works well for schools.

Link to the NSPCC self-assessment tool: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-andresources/working-with-schools/esat/>

2. **Local learning** - We know that this tool won't always reflect our local needs and risks or challenges, so where we need to, we propose that we add in a few additional questions that capture this learning. The Education Safeguarding Groups would oversee these questions.
3. **A summary report** – to analyse overall themes, trends, patterns and development areas, this will be prepared by the Local Authority (due to statutory accountability) and shared in draft with the Education Safeguarding Group and Quality & Performance.
4. **Risk** – if safeguarding risk is identified, it is the Local Authorities' responsibility to work alongside the school concerned to improve practice until concerns are resolved. The Safeguarding Partnership will have overall oversight of these arrangements.
5. **Peer Review** – Reading's schools have really benefitted from piloting a safeguarding Peer Review process where leaders from schools pair up and peer review an aspect of each other's safeguarding, to share learning and improve practice. We'd like to see if we could do something similar on a Berkshire West footprint. We think this would help share learning between LA areas and support specialists or alternative education providers. Peer Reviewers would be trained in a support/challenge approach to review.
6. **Governors/Trustees** – we recognise that Governors' understanding of how to analyse safeguarding practice in schools and provide internal support and challenge is variable. We think the Safeguarding Partners could assist, by training Berkshire West Governors in the skill of support/challenge questioning approach in their role, specifically applied to their statutory accountability for safeguarding.

In addition, we'll also work together to devise a parallel safeguarding self-assessment tool for early years providers, in partnership with Early Years leaders.

Overall, we think this framework will give us a strong arrangement that will demonstrate to external partners, including Ofsted in school inspections, that safeguarding leadership, self-assessment and quality assurance is strong within our school leadership system. Externally, this is assured and supported by the wider Safeguarding Partnership.

This enables a 'golden thread' of safeguarding to be clearly evident from frontline practice in schools, through Local Authority governance, to the overarching Safeguarding Board arrangements.

Questions for School Leaders:

- **What do you think of the proposed arrangements?**

- **Are there risks or vulnerabilities in these arrangements that we need to think about together?**
- **What other opportunities or options do you think we could consider together as a system?**
- **Any other comments?**