

Safeguarding Early Adopters programme

Learning example



Early Adopter: Hertfordshire

Learning theme: Engagement with schools

Introduction

There are 534 education settings in Hertfordshire (including 60 independent schools) and significant work has been undertaken to ensure they are engaged in the work of the new Safeguarding Partnership.

Background, aims and objectives

There has been a consistent engagement of school representatives on the Strategic Board in the previous LCSB arrangements. The aim has always been to ensure schools are involved in all aspects of the Partnership as a genuine partner, and the statutory partners were keen to ensure this continued with the new arrangements and that good relationships were continued and strengthened.

Approach

The Independent Chair and Director of Children's Services began by engaging a group of representative Head teachers through a Children's Reference Group over the last year, to develop future arrangements to promote safeguarding in schools.

In addition to this, the journey to engage all schools has included a number of other specific elements:

Twilight sessions :

These have been used to engage Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) in all schools and are held termly in three different areas (hosted by schools). These sessions provide an opportunity for all schools to contribute to the safeguarding agenda and be part of a feedback loop; they enable schools to meet with key officers and partner agencies and also to be informed about any ongoing safeguarding priorities and new initiatives. It was agreed that attendance at twilight meetings would be recognised as part of CPD for DSLs in relation to the expectation in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) 2018 that all school safeguarding leads receive regular updates in addition to their required training programme. *'In addition to their formal training, their knowledge and skills should be updated, (for example via e-bulletins, meeting other designated safeguarding leads,*

or taking time to read and digest safeguarding developments), at regular intervals, but at least annually, to keep up with any developments relevant to their role.'

These sessions have focussed on the Brook tool (sexual abuse assessment tool), recording in schools focusing on child protection and including GDPR, the new referral form process, online safety including sexploitation, knife, gangs and county lines and having difficult conversations with parents. These sessions have been well attended with approximately 200-250 attendees per topic. In future they will mirror the Learning Hub in terms of topics, and for the spring and summer term 2019 will focus on emotional wellbeing including self-harm and suicide, and neglect with a particular focus on domestic abuse and parental mental health. These topics are informed by the partnership priorities but also feedback from schools about issues pertinent to them.

S11/s175 audit:

Section 11 (4) of the Children Act 2004 places a statutory requirement on organisations and individuals to ensure they have arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This is supported by the Safeguarding Children in Education Act (\$175/157) which includes requirements to evaluate the effectiveness within schools to safeguard children. (DfE guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE))

The section 11 audit questionnaire of frontline staff has been used in Hertfordshire as a mechanism for engaging with schools. Schools have been encouraged to involve as many members of staff as possible in completing the s11 questionnaire, including teachers, lunchtime supervisors, caretakers, governors etc. The purpose is to identify gaps, strengths and weaknesses in safeguarding practice as well as identifying areas for improvement. It is designed to support schools in showing that their staff know and understand procedure, have had appropriate training and provides evidence to report to governors and Ofsted on how their duties under S175 of the Education Act 2002 and the DfE guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) have been carried out. It offers external validation of effectiveness of safeguarding and asks the same questions of staff as OFSTED inspectors. Next year, this process will be repeated and the plan is to also ask schools what additional questions they would want to be included into the questionnaire, so it continues to be a useful tool for them to recognize staff training needs in relation to safeguarding.

Training and learning:

Hertfordshire is using the Early Adopters grant to support further training in schools for safeguarding. The proposal is to support schools in accessing safeguarding training from the HSCP multiagency training provision for free going forward. The HSCP is also supporting the roll out of the Trauma Informed Practice initiative by the Council, contributing specifically for schools.

Schools are a key partner in the Learning Hub which has been set up as part of the new arrangements as an important feedback loop between front line practitioners and the Strategic Group. For example several Head teachers have already agreed to speak at

the local Learning Hub forums in their areas in Spring 2019, to offer a schools perspective on the key safeguarding theme being discussed of gangs and knife crime.

The Partnership recently agreed to roll out the Alterego theatre production for years 7/8 on knife crime into schools, with nearly 5,000 young people due to see the performance in February 2019. This has been match funded and will be run again in the Autumn to a new cohort of young people.

Challenges

The large number of schools in Hertfordshire makes engagement with them challenging, and identifying representatives to sit on Safeguarding Partnership's sub groups can sometimes be difficult. However, having specific mechanisms in place to engage with schools such as the Twilight Sessions and the s11 audit process has allowed schools to be fully engaged in multi-agency safeguarding and ensures there is an effective ongoing feedback loop in place around safeguarding practice.

Successes

There has been a very good response as a first trial of the section 11 audit process with approximately half schools responding (280) and 5900 completed questionnaires. This included a good response from independent schools too (16 schools). Each school that took part received their own analysis of the questions answered by their staff and a number of schools have asked whether they could undertake the questionnaire in retrospect as they missed it the first time round, evidencing that this has been helpful for schools.

The audit process was also useful evidence of the effectiveness of schools in Hertfordshire as 99.6% of staff responding knew who to report concern about a child, 99% of staff know where to find safeguarding information, 99% of staff knew the name & job role of the person to speak to if concerns about a colleague's behaviour with regard to children and only 0.8% had not any safeguarding training.

Conclusion

Genuine involvement in multi-agency safeguarding practice from a large number of schools in Hertfordshire has been achieved so far, and the Partnership is committed to building on this engagement as it moves into the new arrangements.