

New Statutory Arrangements for Children's Safeguarding Early Adopters Programme: Interim update

Introduction

This paper provides an overview of activities linked to implementation of the new children's safeguarding partnership arrangements in Greenwich, Lewisham and Bexley. It sets out the background to the new arrangements, reports on programme priorities and progress and offers some early learning from the tri-borough approach.

Research questions

The evaluation will address the following research questions:

- What lessons can be learnt from the implementation of shared responsibility?
- In what ways do the two learning models (i.e. Learning Hub in Bexley and Deep Dive in Greenwich and Lewisham) impact on the different models of reflection, learning and practice?
- What early impact have changes to scrutiny arrangements had?
- What lessons can we learn from the implementation of shared mechanisms and processes for initiating local reviews?

Evaluation work undertaken to date

- Initial document review
- Guided conversation with senior members of the project team
- Observation of the first Learning Hub focused on children and young people who go missing and are at risk of criminal or sexual exploitation
- Guided conversation with Learning Hub observers and the Independent scrutineer

In the next stage, UoB will compare and contrast the Learning Hub model with the Deep Dive approach and consider the impact on reflection, learning and practice.

Background

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 removes the obligation for local authorities to have Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) as outlined in the Children Act 2004. Instead there is a new statutory requirement for health (Clinical Commissioning Groups), police and local authorities to determine local arrangements for the protection and safeguarding of children in their area. The three safeguarding partners named above are responsible for determining local arrangements including involving other relevant agencies.

The changes include:

- equal duties placed on the police, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and local authorities to work together on safeguarding decisions and to promote children's welfare
- placing greater accountability on senior leaders for each agency: the council Chief Executive, the accountable officer of a CCG and the Chief Officer of Police
- strengthening expectations on schools and other educational settings that they must co-operate with the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements;
- extending safeguarding responsibilities to sports clubs and religious organisations in recognition of their important role in working with and protecting children and young people
- new duties on CCGs and local authorities to carry out reviews of child deaths across a wider geographical footprint in order to facilitate greater learning from any themes coming out of those deaths.

Greenwich, Lewisham and Bexley have secured 'safeguarding early adopter' funding to support them to test new children's safeguarding partnership arrangements in line with the legislation and new statutory guidance (HM Government, 2018).

Why this tri-borough arrangement?

The new Metropolitan police basic command (BCU) area covering Greenwich, Lewisham and Bexley offered an opportunity to reinforce an existing tri-borough arrangement. This combined with an existing plan to increase learning from child deaths to inform the Child Overview footprint led partners to convene an initial conversation about a joint bid to become a 'safeguarding early adopter'. Following this initial conversation, key stakeholders/steering group members were identified, and priority areas agreed. A joint bid was submitted in May 2018.

Priority areas

Greenwich, Lewisham and Bexley are addressing the following priority areas:

Priority 1- Addressing local practice challenges

To fully implement Bexley's Local Learning Hub which aims to improve frontline practice engagement with the programme of improvement work associated with new partnerships; share approach with Greenwich and Lewisham to assess if learning may be useful for other boroughs; evaluate if desirable to develop a tri-borough hub model for any future shared priorities.

Priority 2 - Geographical areas

To establish an annual programme of safeguarding partnership improvement and delivery priorities that are shared across the new police basic command (BCU) area – the geographically neighbouring boroughs of Greenwich, Lewisham and Bexley; the first priority is shared approach to protecting children and safeguarding young people who move between our boundaries who go missing and are at risk of criminal or sexual exploitation; shared approach is operationalised via Learning Hub model.

Priority 3 - Independent scrutiny

Explore the role of independent scrutiny across all three boroughs where a range of scrutiny arrangements will be tested. The focus will be on the impact of the partnership arrangements rather than processes. The aim is scope out and develop the basic role, functions and tasks of an independent scrutineer; develop the role's

remit within Bexley and compare and contrast with traditional independent chair role within Greenwich and Lewisham; explore if there is scope within the role to promote peer support and challenge as well as sharing good practice and learning.

Priority 4 - Local reviews

To establish shared mechanisms and processes for initiating local learning reviews, which incorporate a shared tri-borough, multi-agency serious incident and learning sub group. Each review to be led by one of the three participating local authorities and published across the local areas. This aim of this strand is to review local mechanisms for managing learning reviews, test out different ways of learning from individual cases through joint learning events across the three areas, and identify opportunities to share good practice.

Priority 5 - Child death reviews - increasing the footprint

To establish a tri-borough arrangement for reviews of child deaths. The aim of this priority is to increase learning from child deaths through scaling up the Child Death Overview footprint. This builds on an existing plan in place to join up the three areas in response to new statutory guidance.

Programme milestones

- Originally timetabled June-September 2018 (4-month programme) with milestones identified for each month – submitted in the programme bid.
- Revised due to delays with the commencement of the programme and Bexley having an Ofsted inspection in July 2018.
- Funding confirmed alongside programme running until March 2019 so two phases of activity identified in revised programme plan.

Programme operationalisation

Programme governance

- Steering group meetings convened in August, October, November 2018 (and 6-weekly to follow).
- Project lead appointed August 2018 (plus business support and project supporters from 3 areas – non-voting attendees of steering group)
- 3-weekly project monitoring meetings between project lead and Bexley operational lead
- Terms of reference for steering group agreed October 2018
- Academic partner procured September 2018

Programme communications

- Press release about successful bid/Bexley new partnership October 2018
- Briefing note to Bexley partners and briefing sessions from November 2018
- Bexley new published arrangements document submitted to DfE and circulated to wider multi-agency network in Bexley
- Present to Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) Tri-borough June 2018 plus local events
- Second tri-borough stakeholder event November 2018
- Presentations at London LSCB development day (October 2018) and Hertfordshire LSCB development day (November 2018)

Programme implementation

- Project group for learning reviews priority established and initial scoping meeting took place October 2018
- Observers from Greenwich and Lewisham identified to attend the Bexley Learning Hub in October 2018 – pre-observation phone calls took place to brief observers
- Post-Learning Hub session debrief took place with observers facilitated by UoB to explore merits and potential value of the model

Learning to date

What are the challenges?

- Competition - programme priorities compete with 'business as usual'
- Complexity – managing diaries as a tri-borough means coordinating the schedules of three Directors of Children's Services (DCS), three representatives from health and a senior police officer
- Uncertainty – about the status of 5 shared priorities as opposed to the formation of 1 overarching partnership arrangements for 3 areas
- Lack of clarity - about the processes and timescales within each of the priorities, specifically of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel

- Funding - which agencies are responsible for funding CDOP? Who in those agencies can authorise funding? What happens when there is disagreement between partners about the amount of resource required?
- Unforeseen activity - change of personnel in police, OFSTED inspection in Bexley

Responding to challenges

- Ensure role clarity – make sure that representatives at meetings have the power to manage decisions, remaining mindful that job titles and roles may not necessarily align across partner agencies
- Prioritise diary management – to ensure logistical difficulties do not hinder programme implementation
- Identify priorities – focus on the ‘must dos’ and concentrate on those
- Strengthen working together – working group on Local Reviews is developing tri borough response.
- Virtual meetings – can be a helpful once working relationships established via face-to-face meetings in the early implementation stage
- Address communications – pay attention to communications via press release about early adopter programme to clarify about time-limited shared priorities (reiterated in Bexley’s governance papers and published arrangements document to reassure key stakeholders)

Successes to date

- Recruitment of key programme personnel (including academic partner) within compressed timescale – mix of internal appointments and targeted procurement of academic partner
- Steering group members identified swiftly, and meetings of steering group held in August, October, November 2018 (and 6-weekly to follow)
- Accelerated starting point – Bexley’s transition project plan and timeline (to move to Children and Young Board) and Bexley Learning Hub model in place, enabling an already in-built compare and contrast element given Lewisham and Greenwich are still operating their Local Children’s Safeguarding Boards (LSCBs)

- Bexley shadow new arrangements meetings from Jan 2018 gave opportunity to work through new partnership architecture, governance, priority setting and test out those arrangements ahead of disbanding the LSCB

Next steps for the UoB evaluation team

The UoB team will continue with the following activity:

- Development of a theory of change
- Understanding baseline practice and organisational context
- Examination of the strengths and limitations of learning models (Bexley Learning Hub and Greenwich and Lewisham Deep Dive)
- Mapping shared mechanisms and processes for initiating local reviews and exploration of perceived impact
- Exploring implementation of independent scrutiny arrangements and the impact of partnership arrangements

During the course of the study the research team will explore the extent to which attributes for the rapid diffusion of innovation are in place (relative advantage over current practice, compatibility with existing values and practice, complexity or simplicity of implementation, piloting of new ideas, observability or seeing results swiftly).

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