

# Safeguarding Matters

FAO Headteachers, Governors, Designated Safeguarding Leads and key professionals

## In this e-briefing:

- A message from Phil Cooper
- Autumn Term Training
- Model Policies
- Coming Soon: Liquid Logic
- Admissions practices
- Key Practice Reminders
- Learning from recent national safeguarding practice reviews
- Changes to Keeping Children Safe in Education, September 2022
- LA S175 audit
- Transferring safeguarding information and records

## A message from Phil Cooper, Senior School Improvement Officer for Safeguarding and Inclusion

Dear colleagues,

I am leaving my role towards the end of September 2022. It has been a privilege, over these past 12 years, to work in partnership with schools and other agencies to support the safeguarding of children. I have been very fortunate to have enjoyed warm, positive and supportive relationships with everyone. I am always in awe of everyone's commitment to working together to protect children and young people placing their needs, 'voice' and lived experience at the centre of our thinking.

Nicola Noon will continue to ensure that the team provides the best possible service, and will be supported by the appointment of a new addition to the team. Nicky has been an asset since joining the service in 2018 and a pleasure to work with, as have my other colleagues within School Improvement Liverpool and LCC.

Finally, can Nicky and I wish you a well-deserved summer break when it arrives.

Best wishes

Phil

### Autumn Term Training

Our training programme can be found [here](#) including:

- Autumn term Headteachers' Safeguarding Briefings
- Statutory Designated Safeguarding Lead Training
- New to the Role of Designated Safeguarding Lead

If a Headteacher is also the Designated Safeguarding Lead then they should attend both the Headteachers' briefings **and** the statutory refresher training for Designated Safeguarding Leads.

### Model Policies

As always, we like to share with you the updated model policies ahead of the start of the Autumn term. They should be personalised by each setting taking into consideration the local context and needs of the children. The model policies can be found [here](#).

### Coming Soon: Liquid Logic

Trials are being undertaken to ensure every Liverpool Designated Safeguarding Lead will have access, via 'read-only' to key information within LCC's Children's Service Liquid Logic module. This should have a great impact in supporting each school's assessment of need and making sure historic concerns are known. Thank you to Assistant Director Suzanne Metcalfe, colleagues at LCC and those schools involved in the pilot for making this happen.

## Admissions practices

The Local Authority and EWO Service Manager have confirmed that if schools are notified that a child has been allocated a place at their school then legislation states the school should place the child on their roll within 10 days of this letter. (For children transitioning between key stages e.g. primary to secondary then the child should be placed on roll at the start of the new term).

The new school should always have a conversation with the previous setting and gather information, particularly about any safeguarding concerns or risks. Any safeguarding and child protection files should be transferred with 5 days of the child being placed on roll.

Sometimes, despite being allocated a place, a child and family don't actually take up the place. The child refuses to attend or the parent has no intention of sending the child to your school.

In the past some schools haven't undertaken to place the child on roll until the child and parent have attended an admissions meeting and the child then actually attends for the first day at their new school. This practice is at odds with the requirements of the legislation and doesn't best serve the needs of the child. Hence, the child must be placed on roll within 10 days of the Local Authority's notification letter.

We appreciate that some children may quickly become non-attenders and a burden for the school's resources whilst also impacting upon the school's attendance figures. However, the child will be better safeguarded by having these issues addressed by the school rather than not being placed. The school is able to follow its normal robust practices and work with other agencies to challenge and improve the situation.

Placing a child on roll doesn't prevent schools from having an admissions meeting once the parent and child agree to attend. Whilst there are natural concerns with placing a child on roll before the school has seen them, there is a huge benefit to a child's non-attendance being addressed by the school's robust practices.

Going forward, the Local Authority's admissions team will escalate the matter and when necessary contact the LSCP and School Improvement Liverpool's Safeguarding Team if they are not able to confirm the child has been placed on roll.

Addressing this issue should prevent a large number of children being identified as being without a school placement.

## Key Practice Reminders

Colleagues may remember the comments made by Lord Laming following the murder of Victoria Climbié:

*'The extent of the failure to protect Victoria was lamentable. Tragically it required nothing more than basic good practice being put into operation...doing the basic things well saves lives.... Victoria died because those responsible for her care adopted poor practice standards'.*

Sadly, many more children have died with similar lessons being identified. The Safeguarding Pledge at the end of this bulletin should help provide a continued reminder to us all about some of the key elements of effective practice.

Naturally, safeguarding practice reviews (formerly serious case reviews) focus on learning lessons in respect of multi-agency practice following the death of a child where abuse is a factor. As important as it is to implement this learning, we should also remind ourselves that most of the time the majority of children are better protected by collective actions.

We should continue to challenge ourselves and others to ensure the following key practice standards are met:

- Before a child in need plan is closed there should be a child in need meeting which seeks the views of all professionals and identifies a lead practitioner to continue early help, where this is required.
- Any decision to close or step down a plan should be based upon a thorough assessment including the 'voice of the child'. Non-engagement should never be a reason for discontinuing a plan, particularly where the desired outcomes have not been met.
- All agencies should ensure that a written report is sent securely to the social worker and Independent Reviewing Officer in advance of a child protection conference. This report should be provided on an agreed template.
- When a referral to children's services for statutory intervention (section 17 or 47) is not accepted, the referrer should receive written feedback providing the rationale for the decision with any recommendations, where appropriate. If the outcome of a statutory referral is that an early help assessment is undertaken, then this should be progressed in a timely way.
- Where a child or young person is not attending an educational setting, regular 'safe and well' checks should be undertaken by professionals who should 'see and speak to the child'. This should lead to further co-ordinated multi-agency interventions. Escalation protocols should be followed when the child's welfare cannot be confirmed.
- Where a practitioner makes a referral to children's services that is deemed inappropriate, the feedback to the referrer should be shared with the lead for the setting and the safeguarding lead for the agency.
- Where there are concerns about the neglect and care of a child by a parent or carer then consideration should always be given to undertaking an NSPCC Graded Care Profile assessment and drawing upon the local neglect assessment tool.
- Child protection conference minutes, core group minutes, child in need plans and child protection plans, together with the minutes and plans from other multi-agency meetings, should be shared in a timely way.
- All agencies should challenge the non-attendance at child protection conferences, non-return of the agency report to conference and poor progress against child protection plan targets. This challenge should be captured in conference minutes. This activity should be mirrored in other multi-agency processes.

- Decision making in multi-agency meetings is a shared responsibility. We should all scrutinise and analyse the information
- When schools receive an Operation Encompass notification they should re-evaluate the child's needs against the 'levels of needs framework' and take appropriate action, including considering the need to undertake an early help assessment. Following every Operation Encompass notification, the child's voice should be captured to enable professionals to better assess the ongoing risks.
- Given the vulnerability of children who attend alternative educational provision, consideration should always be given to undertaking an early help assessment to ensure effective multi-agency practice. There should be regular multi-agency meetings to coordinate interventions for children attending alternative provision who have additional needs, including welfare concerns. Schools should record and monitor carefully the attendance and other outcomes for the child. They should ensure that the provision is in the best interests of the young person and that the curriculum meets their needs. The child should have access to the same support as other children and their views and wishes regularly considered.
- Non-attendance of a child at a CAMHS or other appointment should never be a reason for closing a case, given the child's needs will remain unmet. Efforts should be made with partner agencies to support the child and family so they are able to attend. We should all abandon the phrase 'DNA- Did Not Attend' and replace it with 'Was not brought'.
- All assessments, referrals and safeguarding records should capture the voice of the child, including non-verbal communication and our observations of them. Only through developing a better understanding of the child's lived experiences can we better understand the child's needs and any risks. The child's 'voice' is the most important factor in safeguarding children. We need to continue to upskill ourselves of the practices and tools to help us hear the child's voice. This should be a focus of all our professional development.
- Schools should ensure they upload notes/minutes to meetings, agency reports to conference and MARFs to any online safeguarding management system.
- Reflection is critical within safeguarding activity. We need to continue to create space to consider how we remove barriers to making progress. Whilst single agency supervision is critical, it is our multi-agency conversations, information sharing and decision-making which are at the heart of effective safeguarding practice. Professionals should ensure they are meeting regularly, and in person, to review a child's needs and adopting an outcome focussed approach. We should continue to ask ourselves 'What evidence have we got that this child is safe'.
- Schools should ensure their own supervision records capture how actions arising in supervision meetings are being addressed.
- Escalating our concerns with other professionals is not simply complaining or registering our disagreement. To protect children, we need to have a professional dialogue and meet to discuss our concerns. The escalation process should only cease once you are satisfied your concerns are being appropriately addressed in the best interests of the child. The

local safeguarding partnership 'escalation and resolution' procedures should always be followed.

- Chronic non-attendance at school is 'Educational Neglect' and the responsibility of all agencies who make up the 'team around the child'. Whilst chronic non-attendance may be symptomatic of other forms of neglect and harm, it must be recognised that chronic non-attendance is in itself a form of neglect without any additional factors. As a child's attendance begins to fall, schools and other agencies should always offer the family support through an early help assessment before a referral to children's services for statutory intervention becomes necessary.

## **Learning from recent national safeguarding practice reviews**

The murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson were truly shocking events which serve to remind us that children can be systematically harmed at the hands of the partner of one of their parents, with that parent also complicit in the murder. The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's enquiry into the lessons learned from the murders of these two children finds that child protection practice should be handed over to specialist multi-agency teams of expert practitioners.

In Arthur's case, the panel found that professionals had only limited understanding of what life was like for him, did not always hear his voice, and did not challenge their initial consideration that his father was protective. In addition, they did not take appropriate account of the concerns raised by the wider family. There was a clear failure by children's services to convene a multi-agency strategy discussion following Arthur's paternal grandmother reporting bruising that she felt may have been carried out by his step-mother. Overall, the review found a 'systematic flaw in the quality of multi-agency working, with an over-reliance on single agency processes with superficial joint working and joint decision-making.'

The panel found a number of similar findings in the case of Star, who was murdered by her mother's partner. Again, professionals did not listen to wider family's concerns and had limited understanding of what life was like for Star. Sadly, the panel concluded that what happened to Arthur and Star were not isolated incidents, and their deaths reflected wider problems in child protection practice. Two key lessons emerged from these and the review of other cases:

- Multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding children are too fragmented, with inadequate information sharing making it "extremely difficult" to build and maintain an accurate picture of what life is like for the child.
- A need for "sharper specialist child protection skills and expertise, especially in relation to complex risk assessment and decision making; engaging reluctant parents; understanding the daily life of children; and domestic abuse".

In addition, the panel made several recommendations to the Government to improve the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding practice.

We will revisit and further discuss the learning from these safeguarding practice reviews in the autumn term.

## Changes to Keeping Children Safe in Education, September 2022

The changes to Keeping Children Safe in Education for September 2022 aren't as substantial as in previous years. The key ones are highlighted below:

- The DfE's guidance on Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges (DfE 2021) has been merged into Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE 2022). The term 'child-on-child abuse' has replaced 'peer-on-peer abuse'.
- A number of words are now bolded within Keeping Children Safe in Education to emphasise that safeguarding is **everyone's** responsibility and we should always act in the **best interest** of the child.
- A new paragraph has been added to explain why some children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused. It makes clear the importance of staff considering how to 'build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication'. It highlights the need for professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL if anyone has concerns about a child.
- A further new paragraph addresses domestic abuse, recognising that children may be affected by seeing or hearing domestic abuse. They can also experience it in their own intimate relationships.
- Training for governors has been clarified to ensure that *'all governors and trustees receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online) training at induction. This training should equip them with the knowledge to provide strategic challenge to test and assure themselves that safeguarding policies and procedures in place in schools and colleges are effective and support the delivery of a robust whole-school approach to safeguarding. Their training should be regularly updated.'*
- Clearly governors who are volunteers in school will need additional similar training to that of all staff and volunteers.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education now makes reference to human rights legislation, making it clear that being subject to harassment, violence or abuse may breach children's rights as set out in the Human Rights Act.
- The DfE guidance reminds governing bodies and proprietors that they should be aware of their obligations under the Equality Act 2010. This includes, as an example, ensuring schools do not unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of their protected characteristics.
- The guidance makes clear the importance of providing LGBTQ+ with a safe space for them to speak out or share their concerns with a member of staff.
- In respect of online safety, the guidance reminds schools that they should regularly review the effectiveness of their filtering and monitoring systems. The guidance sets out key information that schools should share with their parents and carers.
- In respect of safer recruitment, the DfE sets out the expectation that schools should undertake online searches as part of their due diligence on all shortlisted candidates.
- In respect of low-level concerns, schools should have clear procedures for staff confidentially sharing their concerns. The Headteacher should always be informed of all low-level concerns and should have oversight of any decisions made or actions taken.
- A new paragraph has been included to cover the extended role of virtual school headteachers, who now have responsibility for the oversight of the attendance, attainment and progress of all children with a social worker.
- Additional guidance has been added in paragraphs 198-200 in relation to children with special educational needs and disabilities or physical health issues. This is to ensure that children with cognitive difficulties are better understood. Additional pastoral support

may well be required and the SENCO should liaise closely with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

- A number of additional links have been added to the appendices, including greater reference to the impact of adverse childhood experiences on a child's mental health. Further resources are provided.
- Following the Child Q safeguarding practice review, schools should be aware of the requirement for children to have an appropriate adult with them. Further information can be found in the new statutory guidance – PACE Code C 2019.
- We will discuss the implications of these and further changes on policy and practice during the forthcoming autumn term safeguarding briefings and refresher training.

## **LA S175 audit**

Thank you to everyone for completing the Liverpool Local Authority S175 audit again this year.

The audit is predominately a self-evaluation tool which enables the school to demonstrate to itself and the Local Authority that it is compliant with a range of standards often linked to statutory responsibilities.

We work hard each year to ensure that the document is updated to reflect changes in national or local guidance and expectations. This should support schools to ensure their practice remains current. As an example, next year we plan to add in a question asking schools to confirm the number of children who have a reduced timetable risk assessment in place that is registered with the LA.

### **Quality assurance of the S175 Audit**

A key part of each school's role in completing the S175 process is how they quality assure the audit. The Headteacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Chair of Governors and Safeguarding Governor are expected to scrutinise and sign off the audit. This should include examining the evidence underpinning a range of questions. A copy of the audit signed by all parties should be retained in school and made available to the LSCP on request.

In addition, the full governing body should maintain oversight of the process and establish any actions that have arisen are addressed.

Despite the above practice being requested, we occasionally find that school leaders and governors have signed off processes that aren't actually compliant. Recently a school confirmed its single central record was 'in place' yet it was later established the single central record was significantly adrift from statutory expectations. Similarly, a school confirmed in its audit return that 'safeguarding records are transferred to the next setting' only to later establish there was no evidence of this happening.

We would strongly urge schools to draw upon the Headteacher's Quality Assurance Checklist found in School Improvement Liverpool's 'School's Safeguarding Handbook'. This will enable a range of activities to develop that support school leaders to check and scrutinise practice. These activities can also form part of Link Safeguarding Governor meetings, safeguarding learning walks and the outcomes should feed into the termly report to governors.



In addition, we hope to develop a process whereby School Improvement Liverpool, on behalf of the LSCP, samples a number of audit returns and meets with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors to discuss how the audit was developed and scrutinised internally.

### **Developing the Liverpool 175 audit going forward:**

There is opportunity for schools to simply amend their responses from the previous year's audit. This is only possible when there aren't substantial changes to the questions asked, hence it has not always been possible previously. Whilst there are time saving benefits, we need to ensure that each question and the supporting evidence are appropriately reviewed.

A natural concern for schools is that the audit has grown year on year. Changes have been in line with the significantly expanded statutory guidance: Keeping Children Safe in Education. However, we will look to review the audit tool to establish that every question is still needed and of benefit.

Finally, it would be prudent to consider requesting the data collection in sections 1 and 2 in the audit to be completed by all schools at the start of the year. This will allow this key data to be used more effectively.

Other sections could be completed during the year and following the key autumn term training/briefing opportunities.

### **Transferring safeguarding information and records**

In the last e-briefing we reminded everyone of the key practices that need to be in place when a child moves setting, whenever that occurs.

Whilst fairly straightforward, these processes are key to safeguarding everyone and we would strongly urge Headteachers to ensure they are in place.

#### **Before the child transfers**

There should be a handover meeting/conversation to discuss the child's needs and help the new setting prepare for the placement. This should include:

- The level of need
- The name and contacts details of the SW and other key professionals
- The date of the next professionals' meeting
- Any current and historic safeguarding concerns and risks
- Any other relevant information

A note of this meeting should be kept within the child's records e.g. added to CPOMS, My Concern etc.

#### **Within 5 days of the child being placed on the roll of the new setting:**

The child's safeguarding/child protection file should be sent securely to the new setting. The previous setting should retain evidence of the transfer.

## Appendix 1:

My Safeguarding Pledge below:

### My Safeguarding Pledge<sup>®</sup>

To demonstrate my commitment to safeguarding children I pledge to:

- ensure that children are visible, their voices heard and their needs, views and wishes addressed
- recognise that some children may be more vulnerable to harm due to their age, specific needs, home circumstances, online activity, associations or other contextual factors
- work in partnership with other agencies, always acting in the best interests of children
- act without delay to protect children from harm and abuse
- provide early help before children's needs escalate further
- apply the local 'levels of need guidance' to assess and re-evaluate children's needs
- share information promptly to support a collective and holistic assessment of children's needs
- strengthen relationships with families, supporting them to build resilience by adopting a solution focused approach
- attend all multi-agency meetings to ensure collective responsibility for achieving positive outcomes for children in a timely way
- ensure agencies challenge each other so that actions are taken promptly, avoiding professional drift
- follow local multi-agency procedures to escalate concerns until there is an appropriate resolution
- participate in regular and effective supervision with my peers so that there is strong oversight of decisions made and actions taken
- meet all mandatory training requirements, regularly updating my professional knowledge whilst applying any learning to my practice and cascading to others