

Committee(s)	Dated:
Safeguarding Sub Committee	7 th February
Subject: CHSCP Update Re Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	Contribute to a flourishing society - People are safe and feel safe.
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	£ Not applicable
What is the source of Funding?	Not applicable
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Not applicable
Report of: City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (CHSCP)	For Information
Report author: Rory McCullum	

Summary

To update the Safeguarding Sub Committee on the work being undertaken in response to the publication of Ofsted's report reviewing sexual abuse and harassment in schools and colleges, which was published in June 2020. The CHSCP has been working with partners and schools to address the learning from the report.

Recommendation(s)

That the Safeguarding Sub Committee notes the progress made.

Main Report

Background

Following the murder of Sarah Everard in March 2021 there was increased awareness of the issue of violence against women and girls. It was at this time that the Everyone's Invited website came to national prominence.

Everyone's Invited stated that it was '*a place for survivors to share their stories*' and had as its mission '*to expose and eradicate rape culture with empathy, compassion and understanding*'.

The website saw thousands of young women report their experiences of harassment, abuse and assault perpetrated by boys or young men who either attend their own school, a neighbouring school or their university. The reports were anonymous though the testimonies often named the school or university the perpetrator attended. Independent and state schools

nationally were named on the site. Reported incidents occurred both in school and out of school (e.g. at parties). Some boys also posted their experiences.

Nationally in response the following occurred:

- Nationally coordinated police response.
- A 'Report Abuse in Education' helpline set up.
- Ofsted were asked to conduct a review; and
- Entries reviewed and, where appropriate, local safeguarding partners notified.

In September 2021, the Executive of the London Safeguarding Children Partnership met and discussed the ongoing work to protect children from sexual harassment and assault. Following that discussion, it highlighted to local safeguarding partnerships a joint letter from the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Education and the Home Office sent to all safeguarding partners.

The letter reminded safeguarding partners of the request from Minister Ford to review how they work with all your schools and colleges locally [including academies and independent schools] and to set out your offer of support to schools and colleges.

The CHSCP's offer of support can be found on its dedicated schools and colleges webpages [HERE](#).

Current Position

Ofsted's review of sexual abuse and harassment in schools & colleges

In June 2021 Ofsted published their review of into sexual abuse and harassment in schools and colleges having visited 32 schools and spoken with over 900 young people in those settings. Ofsted's report can be found [here](#).

A summary of Ofsted's findings is set out below.

- The review highlighted how prevalent sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are for children and young people and that incidents were so commonplace that children and young people saw no point in reporting them.
- Girls told Ofsted that sexual harassment and online sexual abuse was much more prevalent than adults realise and that it occurred so frequently that it had become commonplace. The frequency of harmful sexual behaviours means that some children and young people consider them normal.
- When asked about where sexual violence occurred unsupervised spaces outside of school, such as parties or parks without adults present, were mentioned though some girls reported to Ofsted that they also experienced unwanted touching in school corridors.
- 4Children and young people, especially girls, told Ofsted that they do not want to talk about sexual abuse for several reasons, even where their school encourages them to. For example, the reported that the risk of being ostracised by peers or getting peers into trouble is not considered to be worth it for something perceived by children and young people to be commonplace. They were also worried about how adults will react, because they think they will not be believed, or that they will be blamed. They also think that once they talk to an adult, the process will be out of their control.

- The Ofsted review found that children and young people reported that they were rarely positive about the relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) they had received. They felt that it was too little, too late and that the curriculum was not equipping them with the information and advice they needed to navigate the reality of their lives.
- In the schools and colleges Ofsted visited, some teachers and leaders underestimated the scale of the problem. They found that schools either did not identify sexual harassment and sexualised language as problematic or they were unaware they were happening. They were however dealing with incidents of sexual violence when they were made aware of them, and following statutory guidance.

Ofsted's report made the following recommendations for schools and colleges:

That school and college leaders should create a culture where sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are not tolerated. They should assume that sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are happening in their setting, even when there are no specific reports, and put in place a whole-school approach to address them, which should include:

- A carefully sequenced RSHE curriculum, based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance, that specifically includes sexual harassment and sexual violence, including online;
- High-quality training for teachers delivering RSHE;
- Routine record-keeping and analysis of sexual harassment and sexual violence, including online, to identify patterns and intervene early to prevent abuse;
- A behavioural approach, including sanctions when appropriate, to reinforce a culture where sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are not tolerated;
- Working closely with local safeguarding partners in the area where the school or college is located;
- Support for designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) Training for all staff

Schools and colleges have been told to assume that sexual abuse and harassment is taking place in their school even if there are no reports and plan a whole school response accordingly.

Since publication of the review the Department for Education has updated its guidance relating to [Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools and Colleges](#) and [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#).

Ofsted have also updated their inspection framework to ensure peer on peer sexual harassment and sexual violence, including online feature as part of the inspection of schools from September 2021.

What are schools are doing in response

Since publication of Ofsted's report, schools and colleges have responded to the issues raised in the review and have sought to create a culture where girls and young women are safe in schools. Different schools and colleges nationally have responded to the report in different ways depending on their school or college context. Activities have however broadly fallen into one of five categories:

Understanding the current situation by ;

- Meeting with groups of pupils
- Meeting with staff
- Reviewing behaviour incidents

Handling disclosures by ;

- Reviewing and updating reporting mechanisms Introducing anonymised reporting
- Discussing how best to report with pupils

Policies, procedures and training by;

- Updating safeguarding and behaviour policies
- Providing training for relevant staff

RSHE Curriculum by ;

- Reviewing and updating the RSHE curriculum, including involving pupils
- Ensuring key topics were revisited
- Training for staff delivering the RSHE curriculum

Raising Awareness by ;

- Holding age-appropriate assemblies with pupils
- Briefing staff on the report and any changes to policies
- Sharing the report with staff and parents
- Providing advice to parents on boundaries

Local support to schools and their pupils

- The CHSCP recognises the vital role of schools and colleges in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. As part of our local safeguarding system, all schools and colleges in the City of London and Hackney are designated as relevant agencies. This places them at the centre of our arrangements.
- To help schools and colleges deliver high-quality safeguarding and child protection practice, a range of support and services are available. To navigate what's on offer, these have been set out under a dedicated webpage under three key headings of People, Policy and Practice.
- There are a range of organisations, teams, forums and individual practitioners that can provide direct support to schools, colleges and the wider education sector. These arrangements help make children safer and support positive experiences for them in education.
- A key collaboration of people is evident within the **City of London's Safeguarding Education Forum (SEF)**. The SEF provides an opportunity for the City of London Schools to meet on a termly basis to share and consider policy, practice and procedural issues relating to safeguarding arrangements in school settings. The SEF will review national, regional and local issues in terms of statutory requirements and best practice developments. The partnership will provide an opportunity to share learning and best practice, drawing upon school inspections, reviews, self-assessments and school improvement plans in order to improve safeguarding arrangements across all City of London schools.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

This work supports priorities 1 and 2 in the Children and Young People's Plan 2018–21.

- Our children and young people are safe and feel safe
- Our children and young people have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and are well prepared to achieve in adulthood.

Financial implications N/A

Resource implications N/A

Legal implications N/A

Risk implications N/A

Equalities implications – N/A

Climate implications- N/A

Security implications- N/A

Everyone's Invited started a conversation across the education sector about sexual abuse and harassment in schools. The subsequent Ofsted review then revealed the scale of the issue and the everyday experience of many young women.

Since then schools have responded to the issue and have adopted the mantra of assume it is happening here. In doing so they have sought to understand the issue in their school, and to tackle the issue by improving reporting mechanisms, raising awareness across staff, pupils and parents; updating policies and procedures; and improving the quality of RSHE teaching.

The issue of sexual abuse and harassment is bigger than schools alone and is reflective of attitudes prevalent in wider society. Therefore schools will not be able to solve the issue alone but as the Chief Inspector of Ofsted said recently in response to the issue, '*good schools, doing what they do really well, can make a difference*'.

Likewise an issue as endemic as this will not be tackled overnight and requires a sustained approach that ensures that attitudes and behaviours are changed over time as we seek to make the sexual harassment and abuse of young women unacceptable.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Joint letter to Safeguarding Partners
- Appendix 2 – Letter to London Safeguarding Children Partnership

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