



14<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Dear members of London's Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships,

The Executive of the London Safeguarding Children Partnership met on 21<sup>st</sup> September and discussed the ongoing work to protect children from sexual harassment and assault.

Following that discussion, we would like to highlight the joint letter from the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Education and the Home Office sent to all safeguarding partners on 29th July. The letter [attached] reminded safeguarding partners of the request from Minister Ford to review how you work with all your schools and colleges locally (including academies and independent schools) by October half-term and to set out your offer of support to schools and colleges. We understand that there will not be any requirement by government for partnerships to report on the reviews that they have carried out.

With half term fast approaching we wanted to further remind you of this request and also wanted to share some of the key learning from the work of a number of Partnerships to respond to the crisis. These Partnerships have had schools with significant number of disclosures on the Everyone's Invited website and we hope you will find their reflections useful.

- The importance of engaging all schools in safeguarding partnerships including private schools and academies. Partnerships have taken different approaches to this including;
  - Encouraging engagement in local safeguarding arrangements by offering schools which haven't previously engaged, roles on groups such as the Designated Safeguarding Leads [DSL] Forum.
  - Developing a safeguarding framework and asking schools to evaluate themselves against it and submit their response to the Partnership.
  - Reminding schools of the statutory framework which underpins their engagement with safeguarding partnerships.
  - Developing a consistent message about the importance of engaging with safeguarding partnerships so that schools hear the same thing from the social workers, health professionals and police officers working with them.
  - Focussed on developing strong relationships with designated safeguarding leads in order to progress engagement with schools.

It is noted:

- That schools can be named as relevant agencies and required to engage with safeguarding partnerships but none of the boroughs have taken this formal step.
- That the work to develop and maintain positive working relationships across the range of schools in each area is resource intensive.
- 16 local areas are receiving government funding to test different ways of how to secure meaningful engagement with schools and colleges, and in London Hammersmith and Fulham and Richmond and Kingston have both received funding to pilot supervision of DSLs.

Understanding the issues - Partnerships took a range of actions including the following:

- Surveying parents, children and schools regarding their understanding of the scale and nature of the harassment and abuse and comparing these findings with other available data on reporting.
  - This work highlighted a disconnect between children's experiences and what parents and schools thought children were experiencing – as a result the LADO function was extended to address this gap in understanding.
- The need for a comms campaign for parents was identified - to provide advice about the supervision of their children in relation to use of alcohol and drugs, social media and house parties.

Support to all schools

- Letters were sent to all schools explaining the options children and young people had in terms of support from the police, health and children's social care.
- Emergency DSL forums were held with representatives from the partnership and specialist services.
- A Harmful Sexual Behaviour [HSB] survey was sent to all schools – it asked questions about the school culture, policies [including around alcohol], HSB and safeguarding training, as well as reporting of HSB over the last two years.

Ensuring a joined-up response

- Reviews were carried out of local monitoring of HSB referrals; multi-agency training around HSB; which schools had meaningful engagement with School Police Officers and which schools had options for anonymous safeguarding reporting or visible safeguarding information.
- The Clinical Commissioning Group contacted all GPs and mental health services to alert them to the issue and ensure they are prepared for
- Engagement of all schools with Police Schools Officers was prioritised.
- The need for HSB training for all agencies was identified and is being provided.
- Forums and networks were used for sharing good safeguarding practice.
- Developing a programme of PSHE with the Public Health teams and the Community Safety Partnerships.

Thanks to Kingston and Richmond; Hammersmith and Fulham; Haringey; Southwark; Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea for sharing their practice.

Finally, as always, we invite feedback from yourselves regarding the issues that are presenting in your local areas and, in particular, any views as to where the Executive could add value to your work.

Yours sincerely

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Martin Pratt - Chair, Association of London Directors of Children's Services [ALDCS]

James Thomas - Association of London Directors of Children's Services [ALDCS]

Will Balakrishnan Director of Commissioning & Partnerships, Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime [MOPAC]

Nick Ephgrave - Assistant Commissioner, MPS

Melanie Dales – Commander for Safeguarding, MPS

Gwen Kennedy – Regional Safeguarding Lead, NHSEI London Region