

Briefing Note for School Staff

Current Safeguarding Issues and Concerns

Introduction

This paper provides a brief overview and update of current themes in safeguarding. Under each heading there will be some introductory comments followed by a summary of what action is needed in response to concerns. Further detail about all of these issues can be found in the London Child Protection Procedures at www.londonscb.gov.uk and local contact details are also given

Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers

Despite all efforts to recruit safely there will be occasions when allegations of abuse against children are raised. The Barnet Safeguarding Children Board has arrangements in place for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of these arrangements as well as the Department for Children, Schools & Families, which Barnet's Safeguarding Division has a responsibility to routinely report to.

The procedure for managing allegations against staff should be applied when there is an allegation or concern that a teacher or member of staff (including a volunteer) in a school, FE college or other education establishment that provides education for children under 18 years of age has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or;
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

These behaviours should be considered within the context of the four categories of abuse, namely; physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect.

Actions for you

- Devise procedures or ensure existing procedures are up to date for dealing with allegations, and all staff and volunteers understand what to do if they receive an allegation against another member of staff, or if they themselves have concerns about the behaviour of another member of staff. These procedures should include detailing who the allegation should be reported to and noting an alternative member of staff in their absence. In all cases there should be no delay in reporting.
- Whilst many minor incidents do not come into the above categories and are dealt with on a day to day basis and perfectly well by schools, where incidents clearly come within the above procedures or there is any doubt or uncertainty the nominated member of staff should contact the Local

Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in the first instance. The LADO will then take the referral and advise of the next steps, or discuss the allegation or concern to determine if the threshold is met for these procedures.

- To ensure that both pupils and the member of staff whom the allegation has been made against are safeguarded, you should discuss the allegation with the LADO prior to taking any further action such as taking statements. To do so may hamper a police investigation or render the member of staff vulnerable should the matter proceed to court, due to the member of staff not having had appropriate representation and advice. However, a disclosure made by a pupil should always be recorded by the member of staff that the pupil discloses to in the pupil's own words, but the member of staff should refrain from asking the pupil questions.

Should a strategy meeting be convened and conclude that a single agency social care investigation be undertaken, the Safeguarding Division has a dedicated Investigations Officer who will investigate the allegation sensitively.

Bullying

Bullying is a major safeguarding concern for children and young people and has a high priority in Barnet.

Schools are already very actively engaged in tackling this problem through their anti-bullying policies and other initiatives.

In Barnet, a multi-agency group is engaged in looking at the wider implications of bullying both within school but also outside school premises.

The Safeguarding Children Board is keen to seek the views of young people through links with the Youth Board. We know through the Tell us survey that many children in Barnet feel anxious about their safety on the streets and whilst using public transport.

We are also aware of the problems through digital forms of bullying, for example, mobile phones and the internet and the e safeguarding work is also picking this up.

London wide, work is in progress to develop guidance for schools in relation to gang activity and how this might link to bullying in some areas.

Actions for you

- Continue to promote the schools anti-bullying policy and procedures
- Monitor incidents that come to notice within and outside of school
- Be alert to problems that may be experienced outside of school as with any other safeguarding concern

Child Death Functions

Working Together to Safeguard Children and the London Child Protection Procedures set out the processes to be followed when a child dies and should be read in conjunction with this summary process.

There are two interrelated processes for reviewing child deaths:-

- a) A rapid response by a group of key professionals who come together for the purpose of enquiring into and evaluating each unexpected death of a child.
- b) An overview of all child deaths (under 18 years) undertaken by a Child Death Overview Panel.

The Barnet Safeguarding Children Board has responsibility for –

Collecting and analysing information about each death with a view to identifying:

- Any case giving rise to the need for a Serious Case Review.
- Any matters of concern affecting the safety and welfare of children in Barnet.
- Any wider public health or safety concerns arising from a particular death or from a pattern of deaths in Barnet.

Putting in place procedures for ensuring that there is a coordinated response by SCB constituent agencies / partners and other relevant persons to an unexpected death.

The Barnet Child Death Overview Panel (BCDOP) meets quarterly to review every death of a Barnet child. The BCDOP is chaired by Susan Otit, Public Health Assistant Director.

Actions for you

- You may be asked to provide information to the BCDOP of any child attending your school who dies. In certain circumstances you may be invited to attend the panel to give more detailed information.
- Schools may also have a role in supporting siblings and families of children who die.

Information and advice about the process to be followed when a child in Barnet dies can be obtained from: Phil Morris, Divisional Manager, Safeguarding, Children's Service on 0208 359 4532.

Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a standardised assessment process to enable those working with children to identify any additional needs and help access the right services at an early stage. The CAF will help practitioners to gather and understand information about the needs and strengths of a child, based on discussions with the child, their family and other practitioners involved. The form will also help practitioners, to share with others the findings of their assessment. This will then help everyone to plan together what support is required, so that the child's needs can be quickly and effectively met

The CAF is a key element of the government's Every Child Matters agenda as laid out in the Children Act 2004, aimed at promoting multi-agency working with children and their families. The CAF is also central to Barnet's 'Building Resilience, Supporting Independence Strategy' as it will help to identify unmet need and inform future service planning.

Barnet Children's Service have developed a range of resources, materials and practice sharing opportunities to help schools to feel confident in using the CAF. This includes the role of the Interim CAF Advisor who can offer both support to school based practitioners in undertaking individual CAF's and to senior management to imbed the CAF into the schools existing frameworks.

The CAF is particularly relevant for use in schools, as they are well placed to identify problems early on and engage other services where necessary to remove barriers to learning and ensure that children are able to meet the 5 Every Child Matters positive outcomes.

Actions for you

- To ensure that the CAF Needs Analysis Form which was attached to the school circular on the 23rd April 2008 is completed (for further copies contact your CAF Advisor, details below). This will help us to deliver a responsive package of support to your school.
- To identify and send all key staff on the one day CAF training course.
- Develop practices within your school to help identify which children may need a CAF, where possible adopting a whole school approach.
- Support school based staff involved with the CAF process and enable them to attend Barnet's CAF Practitioners group.
- Familiarise yourself with the CAF web pages on Barnet Online: <http://www.barnet.gov.uk/caf>
- If you require any further support contact a CAF Advisor on 020 8359 4107.

Domestic Violence (DV)

Living with DV has a serious impact on children's health and wellbeing in many different ways and can lead to long term and sometimes permanent damage. Not only is it a child protection concern but it can also undermine children's education and their ability to enjoy and achieve.

Domestic Violence cuts across all sectors of the community and can happen in any family. At the most serious end of the spectrum, children can be at risk of significant harm, serious injury and even death. Even when the level of risk is not so severe, the fear and distress created by hearing or seeing incidents of violence within the home cannot be underestimated and most children who live with DV need some form of support.

The London Safeguarding Children Board has recently adopted revised procedures for safeguarding children affected by DV based on the Barnardos Risk Identification and Assessment Model. This was first piloted in Barnet and there is an ongoing training programme for all professionals. One of the core elements of this model is a tool to assist multi-agency professionals (including school based) working with children to identify DV and make appropriate referrals.

Actions for you

- Children consistently say that they want safety and someone to talk to. So consider having information about help lines and websites in your school or college.
- Encourage staff in school to attend the training to raise awareness of DV and how this might present itself
- Respond to any concerns and in collaboration with the designated colleague in your school seek advice as to whether a CAF should be completed, or a Child Protection referral made in the most serious cases
- Promote the delivery of DV training in school

E Safety

The internet is a wonderful tool for education, entertainment and communication but also carries risks associated with unwanted contact and bullying, inappropriate content and commercial exploitation.

Our safeguarding responsibilities must therefore extend to the on line world so that we can maximize the opportunities of digital technology and help children and young people use the internet safely and responsibly.

In Barnet we have established an 'e safety' sub group of the Safeguarding Children Board that is currently developing a strategy consistent with best practice nationally and drawing on the expertise of organisations such as BECTA (British Educational Communications and Technology Agency). There is a focus

on raising awareness and understanding of e safety issues amongst professionals, parents and children and young people. This will include plans to increase the availability of e safety resources for schools, parents and children as well as improving safe access to the internet at home, in school and in the community.

Actions for you

- Ensure that e safety incidents are recognised and escalated appropriately in collaboration with the designated safeguarding person
- Monitor any ICT related safeguarding incidents
- Increase the number of pupils receiving e safety lessons, for example through the CEOP (Child Exploitation and on line Protection) thinkuknow programme
- Promote the use of LGfl supplied filtering in your school environment
- Consider holding e safety information evenings in schools

Further information can be found on Barnet Grid for Learning or

www.becta.org.uk

www.ceop.gov.uk

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), sometimes mistakenly referred to as Female Circumcision, is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as the range of procedures which involve “the partial or complete removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural or any other non-therapeutic reason”.

It is a highly abusive and illegal act with severe health consequences. The procedure is, in most cases carried out by an older woman with no medical training. Anaesthetics are rarely used, and the practice is carried out using basic tools such as knives, scissors, pieces of glass and razor blades.

Any FGM procedure on a woman or girl is unlawful under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003. It is also an offence under the Act for UK nationals or permanent residents to carry out FGM abroad, or to aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad, even in countries where the practice is legal.

FGM is typically performed on girls between 4 and 15, although in some cases it is performed on new babies or to young women prior to marriage

The majority of cases of FGM are carried out, or originate, in communities from 28 African countries. In some countries such as Egypt, Ethiopia, Somalia and

Sudan, prevalence rates are alleged to be as high as 98% and in other countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, Togo and Senegal, the prevalence rates vary between 20-50%. FGM also takes place in parts of the Arabian Peninsula such as Yemen and Oman and by Ethiopian Jewish Falashas, some of whom have recently settled in Israel. It is also reported that FGM is practiced among Muslim populations in parts of Malaysia, Pakistan, Indonesia and the Philippines

It is estimated that as many as 6,000 girls are at risk of FGM within the UK every year.

Actions for you

- Be aware of which pupils might be at risk within the community profile of your school.
- Watch for possible signs including planned absence, prolonged absence, behaviour change or medical problems associated with this procedure (often related to bladder or menstrual functions) Summer holidays are a risky period. Class teachers should be alert to any mention of a 'special procedure' that could suggest this is planned.
- If you suspect that any girl is at risk of being subjected or to any form of FGM, or has already had this procedure take action to report it immediately!!
- Inform your designated child protection Advisor.
- They must make a referral to the Local Authority Children's Social Care.

Forced Marriage

Forced Marriage is a marriage conducted without the consent of both parties and where duress is a factor. It is an entirely separate issue from an arranged marriage which is freely entered into and the two should not be confused. Acts such as Forced Marriage and other so called 'honour crimes' come under the definition of Domestic Violence and a child who is subjected to this is at risk of significant harm through physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

Further information and guidance can be found in the Guidance – 'Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education'. The Government's Forced Marriage Unit has also produced more detailed guidelines that set out how to identify and support young people where this is a threat. A recent letter from Kevin Brennan MP has emphasised the crucial contribution that schools can make in raising concerns and the DCFS and Forced Marriage Unit are currently developing materials for schools, including some that is tailored for pupils.

Revised guidance is due to be issued later this year under the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007

Actions for you

- Be alert to disappearance from school and follow guidance on keeping pupil registers and notifications of missing pupils
- Advice can be sought from specialist caseworkers at the Forced Marriage Unit on 020 7 008 0151
- Concerns should be referred to Police and Children's Service Referral and Assessment Team
- Never try to mediate or speak to any family members as this can be extremely dangerous for the young person

Missing Children

This section should be read in conjunction with the supplementary London Child Protection Procedure: *Safeguarding Children Missing from Care and from Home*.

These London Child Protection Procedures define a child as 'missing' if their whereabouts are unknown, whatever the circumstances of their disappearance. Sometimes children stay out longer than agreed as boundary testing activity which is well within the range of normal teenage behaviour. These children have taken 'unauthorised absence', and would not usually come within the definition of 'missing'. If a child's whereabouts are known then they cannot be 'missing'. Unauthorised absences should be carefully monitored as the child may subsequently go missing.

Children who are most vulnerable to going missing from care and home include those missing from school, looked after children and asylum seeking children.

When a child goes missing from care or home, they could be at risk of significant harm through physical or sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. The child may be missing from care or home because they are suffering physical, sexual or emotion abuse and / or neglect.

Missing Children may also be subject to FGM and Forced Marriage (as above).

Actions for you

- If the school is the agency first alerted to the child's absence, you should (together with the child's parents), decide whether the child is having an 'unauthorised absence' or are 'missing'.
- There is an expectation that parents will report their child as missing. Failure to do so may be a child protection issue and professionals should consider a referral to LA children's social care.
- The police are the lead agency for the investigation of missing children.
- If you become concerned that a child is at risk of significant harm, a referral must be made to LA children's social care.

Private Fostering

Private Fostering refers to a private arrangement that is made to care for a child by an adult who is not a parent or close relative. It is not part of the local authority approved foster carers scheme.

Children and young people aged 16 and under (18 for disabled children) are privately fostered if they live with an adult for more than 28 days who is not their

- Parent
- Close relative i.e. grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt or step parent
- Legal guardian

There are many reasons why children are privately fostered and these may include cultural exchange students, children who are refugees, or whose parents have sent them to this country to improve their education.

There is a legal requirement for parents and private carers to notify the Local Authority Children's Services which has a duty to monitor the arrangement and ensure the child is being looked after properly. Many private fostering arrangements are perfectly fine and require no intervention – but remember Victoria Climbié was a privately fostered child.

Actions for you

- All professionals who work with children have a responsibility to notify the LA Children's Service if they believe a child to be living with someone in a private arrangement
- Admission to school is an opportune time to check these arrangements as there may also be implications regarding parental rights and permissions for activities or medical treatment
- Notifications of these arrangements should include the name and address of the private carer as well as the child and should be made via the referral and assessment duty team
- Leaflets are available for posting around the school and for parents to access

Safer Recruitment Practice

The tragedy of Soham and indeed the earlier Warner report that looked at recruitment and selection in residential children's homes has brought into sharp focus the need to make safeguarding an integral part of recruitment and HR processes.

Experience over many years shows the importance of organizations that provide services to children incorporating measures that help deter, reject or identify people who might abuse children or are otherwise unsuited to work with them, as

well as maintaining ongoing vigilance. This is an essential part of creating safe environments for children to enable them to enjoy and achieve.

The DCFS Guidance 'Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education' 2007 provides detailed guidance for schools and Safer Recruitment Training and Workshops are available both through the National College of School Leadership for an on line option, or for face to face training through Barnet's training programme.

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act has paved the way for revised procedures in relation to vetting and barring that take effect from Oct 2009 and will be administered via the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA)
A briefing event has been arranged in Barnet on 27th April 2009 to inform all those working with children and vulnerable groups about the new scheme and how it will work.

Actions for you

- Ensure at least one member of your recruitment team and a governor have completed the Safer Recruitment Training either on line or through Barnet
- Review existing recruitment procedures to ensure you are considering safeguarding in the selection of staff

References:

Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education 2007
www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People 2007
DCSF

Contact Numbers

If you have any concerns about a child

(Mon-Thurs - 9am-5.15pm, Fri - 9am-5pm)

Referral and Assessment Team

020 8359 4066

Fax

020 8359 4099

Consultation Line (Tue and Wed 9.30am – 11.30am)

020 8359 4336

Remember this number is available for consultation, advice or when you just want to talk over a situation. This number is not for referrals.

Service Manager (Responsible for the referral and assessment service)

Jo Pymont

020 8359 6251

Out of Office Hours

Emergency Social Work Service (including out of hours Child Protection Referrals)

The Barnet Council Emergency Service Controller will take initial details and contact the appropriate out of hours officer.

020 8359 2000

To report allegations against staff

Liz Shaw Local Authority Designated Officer (Francesca Parrington covering)

020 8359 4489

Divisional Managers, Safeguarding Division (Responsible for allegations against staff, child deaths, missing children)

Bridget Griffin/Phil Morris

020 8359 4532

Police Child Abuse Investigation Team (8am-6pm)

020 8733 5070

At all other times-contact this number where the controller will take initial details and contact the appropriate out of hour's officer.

020 8200 1212

CAF Advisor

020 8359 4405

Safeguarding Children Board Development Officer

For advice and information about training, policies and procedures

Helen Elliott

020 8359 4540