

Position Statement: Engagement with the Education Sector from the Calderdale Safeguarding Children Partnership

October 2021

Julia Caldwell, Safeguarding Partnerships Manager

1. National Context

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 ('the Act') created a new framework for the oversight and delivery of the services providing multi-agency arrangements for protecting and safeguarding children. The Act abolished Local Safeguarding Children Boards and created three safeguarding partners:

- the local authority.
- a clinical commissioning group for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area.
- the chief officer of police for a police area any part of which falls within the local authority area

The Act also created the role of a relevant agency. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (WT18) defines these as organisations and agencies whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider is required to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children: *'...all early years' providers, schools (including multi academy trusts), colleges and other educational providers in the local area should be fully engaged, involved, and included in the new safeguarding arrangements'* (WT18).

1.2 Specific National Context: Sexual Abuse

In July 2021, Ofsted carried out a rapid review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges in response to testimonies of abuse and harassment in education settings on the website ['Everyone's Invited'](#). One recommendation from their report was for safeguarding partners: *'to review work to improve engagement with schools of all types in their local area, tailoring their approach to what their analysis (produced in partnership with schools/colleges and wider safeguarding partners) indicates are the risks to children and young people in their local area'*.

The [Tackling Violence against Women and Girls Strategy](#) was published in July 2021, which gave responsibility to education settings to educate, to identify and challenge harmful attitude and behaviours and to support victims and raise awareness of healthy relationships.

In August 2021, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families; Vicky Ford, requested that safeguarding partners review how they work with schools and colleges locally and set out what their offer of support to schools and colleges is.

The Department for Education has subsequently updated the guidance on [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges](#) in September 2021.

2. Local Position

Calderdale Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP) identified schools, colleges, and other educational providers as relevant agencies in 2019 when details of the [Calderdale multi agency safeguarding arrangements](#) were published. The CSCP recognised the importance of the distinct partners and therefore distinguished the different provision in Calderdale:

- Calderdale College
- Calderdale Primary and Secondary Schools (state, academies and independent)
- Calderdale Governors Association
- Early Years Providers

The Calderdale Partnership understands the significance of this sector in the role of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. Therefore, much activity, scrutiny, analysis and communication is directed at education organisations and professionals. Similarly, the CSCP targets school professionals offering professional development opportunities, providing tools and guidance to simplify and improve identification and response to safeguarding concerns, and consulting with education specialists when producing policy, procedure, and frameworks.

The CSCP Executive Group is a small group consisting of the three strategic leads, the Chairs of each subgroup and the two members from the voluntary sector. The Director of Children and Young People's Services is one of the CSCP strategic leads, and is responsible for Education and Inclusion, school effectiveness, vulnerable learners and SEND in Calderdale. The Director and Assistant Directors regularly meet with Head Teachers, hosting Safeguarding in Education Forums and enabling dialogue between schools and the CSCP.

The College Principal, School Head Teachers, the Chair of the Governors Association, the two Children's Centre providers in Calderdale, the Schools Safeguarding Advisor, and Early Years leaders (including the Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency team in the Local Authority who communicate to all childminders, nurseries, pre-school, and early education providers in Calderdale) are part of the wider CSCP membership. Being part of this wider membership means inclusion in two-way communication from the CSCP.

The School Effectiveness Service is leading on the Education Recovery Plan. This is a co-produced plan that includes a strand on pupil wellbeing, including social, emotional, and mental health and is a working document managed by a steering group including school cluster and early years representatives. This includes the Mental Health Support Team based in Schools, and the DFE led Mental Health Training.

This paper sets out in more detail how the CSCP includes, scrutinises, consults with, listens to, and actively engages with educational institutions. Further ambitions for meaningful engagement are included in the summary.

3. Collaboration between CSCP and Early Years / Education Sector

3.1 Channels of Communication

Two-way communication between the CSCP and the wider Education sector is imperative. The CSCP listens to the sector through their membership and attendance on subgroups, through proactive engagement on development days, through the Section 11 process, and through consultation of guidance, tools, policies, and procedures. A variety of conferences, development opportunities and workshops also invite discussion and views about specific topics. A most recent experience was the 'link between poverty and safeguarding' conference where education sector colleagues were involved in the dialogue about what action the CSCP could take following this disturbing evidence.

School professionals are often involved in audit and quality assurance work, surveys of school staff and multi-agency case file audits are typical examples of this. There are three School representative and an Early Years lead sitting on the strategic Quality Assurance subgroup which scrutinises the audit findings and reports to the CSCP.

The CSCP communicates to the sector in a number of ways too. A bi-monthly newsletter is sent to the early years sector, schools, colleges, and through Calderdale Schools Safeguarding Advisor. During COVID, weekly safeguarding messages from the partnership were disseminated to the sector which detailed safeguarding service changes from across the partnership and highlighted national and local plans to mitigate any risks.

Nursery staff, teachers, and designated safeguarding leads get involved in Safeguarding Week every year; in 2021, the Early Years sector provided 4 live training sessions and a video produced by one Calderdale school on Operation Encompass (the Domestic Abuse notification process for all Calderdale Schools and Early Years providers) was well received. The Schools Safeguarding Advisor is part of the Safeguarding Week planning process to represent views of and engagement with schools in Calderdale. This year Evaluation has shown that a number of child minders, early year providers, primary schools and secondary schools took part in at least 1 session during Safeguarding Week.

The CSCP has links with secondary schools and colleges via the CSCP Young Advisors group (group of young people aged 13-17) who engage with school aged children on a number of projects they are completing, including Child Exploitation survey which received 412 student responses, School Transitions survey which received 210 responses, and their current Manifesto for local services leaders.

There are 'lead' Head Teachers who disseminate information and learning through Primary and Secondary Head Teacher networks – we also have used these leads to feed back how information has been disseminated. A good example was learning from a SCR which resulted in suggested changes to school exclusion procedures – the two lead Head Teachers provided minutes evidencing the distribution of learning and evidence of changed policies. The Early Years Team provided evidence of sharing our event on Trauma to all Early Years contacts and through social media. In addition, the Early Years Team have developed their own trauma event in response to the 2021 CSCP priority.

The CSCP Safeguarding Partnerships Manager has a good working relationship with the Schools Safeguarding Advisor. There are opportunities for the Advisor to raise concerns highlighted by schools, he attends a number of subgroups and is ably informed to support and deliver against the CSCP agenda.

3.2 Section 11 Safeguarding Audit

The CSCP engages with nearly 100% of schools and a growing number of early years providers annually for the completion of the Section 11 Audit. A specific approach to schools was made 6 years ago with schools (including private and independent) completing audits and attending cluster challenge and feedback events.

As part of the Section 11 process - Practitioner Focus Groups are held with teachers, designated safeguarding leads and pastoral staff to triangulate the evidence provided in the Section 11 returns. This ensures we get a direct line of sight to front line activity in schools and not just a strategic view from education leaders. Topics in these focussed events are driven by the CSCP priorities and have covered online safety, harmful sexual behaviour, and neglect in the past.

Consultations with these front-line professionals is also concentrated on learning points raised in Serious Case Review and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (namely supervision, information sharing, training etc). Feedback is also sought about the use and effectiveness of CSCP tools and guidance. Feedback from these sessions has shown good levels of use and usefulness:

'the neglect toolkit helps me to show parents how harmful their behaviours can be'

'the toolkit helped me to escalate concerns to MAST'

'the harmful sexual behaviour toolkit really helped because instances of sexual abuse are so rare, it is not common knowledge or practice'.

In some instances, the triangulation with front line practitioners provided more evidence of activity than the strategic Section 11 responses, for example around children with disabilities the front-line professionals were able to evidence much more holistic and multi-agency support work than their audits reported.

Learning from these events is fed back to the Partnership to act on – and briefings returned to schools to assist with safeguarding improvements – these consist of links to tools and guidance where it has been highlighted as needing improvement e.g., links to Mental Capacity Act for 16–17-year-olds, or where schools reported not knowing about specific SCR learning we provide the exact link to it. An example of this briefing can be found on the [Safeguarding Partnerships website](#).

In 2020-2021 the CSCP developed a COVID specific audit focussing on safeguarding during lockdown. The CSCP wider membership each completed the audit, however the CSCP decided not to ask education providers because of the extra pressure each institution was under. Instead, the School Safeguarding Advisor, who had been the link between schools and safeguarding response throughout the pandemic, provided one response on behalf of the education sector. The response contained description and evidence of continued, preventative, and robust safeguarding action. When schools were closed these included daily briefings, evidence that vulnerable children (over 1000) had twice weekly contacts with either school staff or Local Authority staff during the day, and at evenings and weekends. All schools incorporated a COVID addendum to their safeguarding policy and promoted the local mental health website to parents and pupils. Although the government offered a 6-month extension to DSL training requirements, this was not needed for any school in Calderdale, and in fact the number of education professionals attending virtual training far exceeded usual trends. This report can be supplied on request.

3.3 Training for College, Education, and Early Years Professionals

In July 2020 the CSCP bought a new Learner Management System and at the same time had to increase the number of licences due to soaring demand – this demand mainly came from school professionals attending the virtual online courses.

In Calderdale, 1556 School Professionals, 175 Private Day Nurseries, 33 Childminders and 22 Out of School Clubs have created accounts which is the largest percentage of users on the safeguarding training system. These are all users who have registered since July 2020. There are also 532 professionals from the voluntary and community sector – a number of these are Children's Centre staff.

A snapshot of current eLearning in Quarter 2 (July to September 2021) shows 229 school professionals undertook eLearning, as well as 33 early years professionals and 171 voluntary sector workers. In this same quarter 31 education professionals attended face to face training.

Last year, from April 2020 to March 2021; 5183 School professionals accessed online safeguarding learning, with 3461 of these accessing in the first quarter (from 1st April 2020 to 30th June 2020). Similarly, 331 Early Years professionals accessed safeguarding eLearning during this period. There were no face-to-face events during this time, however interactive training was delivered virtually for the first time and attended by 47 education professionals.

Between November 2020 and June 2021, the Schools Safeguarding Adviser supported by other professionals delivered training sessions as part of the Designated Safeguarding Leads network on the following subjects:

Understanding the new Early Help Pathway (66 school DSL's attended), Online Extremism – school response (68 school DSL's attended) and Youth Produced sexual Imagery (66 School DSL's attended).

A training session was held by the Schools Safeguarding Advisor and the Assistant Director for Education and Inclusion to look specifically at sexual abuse and peer on peer abuse based on the Ofsted review and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021. This was attended by 91 school leaders and governors.

3.4 Performance Management Activity

The CSCP scrutinises performance activity from schools and early years data. Not surprisingly, COVID affected numbers of referrals to Children's Social Care with the reduction in referrals from schools predominantly being noted when they were had restricted attendance during lockdown. High referrals to mental health services were recorded when schools reopened and remain high during 2021.

Positively, data shows that professionals from schools and early years settings attended almost 100% of the Child Protection Conferences they are invited to. This data, along with annual rolling reports and assurance from the School Safeguarding Advisor provide a clear and positive picture about how safeguarding is prioritised and comprehended in school and early years settings.

More specifically, the **number of children excluded from or missing education** is monitored quarterly by the CSCP Performance Management Group. This data includes specific information about those pupils missing from education who are also looked after, have SEN support, on free school meals and with EHC plans. The Local Authority Education and Inclusion Services are leading a multi-agency response, including Head Teachers, to improve inclusion and address high numbers of fixed term and permanent exclusion in Calderdale. This includes commissioning an external review of alternative provision, managed moves, and a forum chaired by the external reviewer to look at the system wide response to inclusion. The external review will also look specifically at inequalities such as gender, ethnicity, pupils on free school meals and those with special educational needs. The CSCP has received an interim report on this, partners will be involved in the scrutiny, and the Executive will formally receive findings as the review is completed which will inform CSCP activity.

The number of children who are **electively home educated** have risen during pandemic in line with the national trend. The CSCP sought and received assurance that the Calderdale Vulnerable Learners Team go beyond statutory duties but remain concerned about national policy and the subsequent lack of oversight by children in EHE.

The CSCP has, collectively with other Yorkshire and Humber Safeguarding Partnerships, written to the Department for Education to request that the legislative framework and guidance be strengthened to give sufficient protection for children who might need safeguarding and protecting.

3.5 Learning from Serious Case Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Representatives from education and early years providers are involved in Calderdale Safeguarding Practice Reviews through Panel meetings, in inquiry events, briefings and the subsequent learning. Because it is uncommon for professionals from education and early years settings to be part of safeguarding reviews, the CSCP secretariat helps and coaches panel members to ensure they are supported and confident about their involvement and the subsequent learning.

Learning from Calderdale reviews is systemic and once learning from a particular school or nursery has been acquired, this is disseminated to the whole sector, to inform and improve safeguarding practice and to inform any future commissioning arrangements.

3.6 Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

The CSCP [Harmful Sexual Behaviour toolkit](#) is a practical tool to aid practitioners to assess what is healthy behaviour in regards to sexual development for ages 0-5, 5-9, 10-13, and 14-17. It also helps to assess what might be more worrying or problematic behaviour, and also what is harmful for the same age groups and assists professionals to understand what interventions might be needed at each level.

An audit was undertaken to assess the level of understanding of HSB from professionals including from both primary and secondary schools and school nurses. Findings included positive use of the HSB tool, good examples of the use of innovative practice, and worry boxes in schools, prevention of young people accessing inappropriate online sites, and special schools benefitting from specialist nurses to respond to inappropriate behaviour. However, the audit also found that there was still a lack of clarity about HSB and some areas for improvement in the way agencies worked together to address HSB, including addressing underlying causes of behaviour rather than exclusion from schools. In response, a multi-agency Harmful Sexual Behaviour Panel was set up which meets every two weeks to respond to referrals from schools and early years settings, and the CSCP produced a [screening checklist](#) to assist with assessments.

3.7 Child Exploitation

The Child Safeguarding National Review Panel published their report '[It was hard to escape: Safeguarding children at risk from Criminal Exploitation](#)' in 2020. One known risk factor for exploitation is exclusion from school. The CSCP has, through the Local Authority, directed attention to this and offered collective multi-agency funding to recruit a safeguarding specialist with an education focus in both the child exploitation hub and the front door arrangements. In addition, the CSCP has delivered 25 training sessions to over 285 professionals and been part of raising awareness through an animation series designed for schools specifically aimed at tackling exploitation.

The CSCP Young Advisors produced a PowerPoint presentation explaining Child Exploitation and delivered it to schools. They also held a competition with all Calderdale schools to design a poster raising awareness of Child Exploitation.

4. Summary

Following the letter from Vicky Ford, the Calderdale Safeguarding Children Partnership has considered and reviewed the engagement and approach to schools. This report summarises some of that activity. The CSCP has and will continue to tailor the approach to schools to ensure that data, quality assurance, learning from review, feedback from young people and views of professionals inform what is focussed on, where areas of improvement are and who needs to be considered most at risk in dialogue with schools. Nevertheless, the CSCP will more formally offer opportunities for engagement through the following areas.

4.1 Quality Assurance of Safeguarding and Prevention activity undertaken by Early Years and Education Settings

The CSCP has recognised, through hearing from schools, colleges, and the early years sector (with particular reference on the October 2021 Development Day) that much early help activity is undertaken by education settings which does not reach local authority or CSCP recording or reporting. The College has spoken about a very low number of risks and concerns being referred to MAST or the Early Help Pathway – the rest being managed through pastoral activity within the college and partner agencies (health, mental health, youth offending, drug and alcohol support etc). In response, the CSCP has initiated quality assurance activity to explore activity in educational establishments and recognise the good practice. Calderdale is the only authority where every school is linked by the same software system (CPOMS), therefore there are opportunities for enhanced auditing and reporting. Case studies and examples of activity will initially reflect and illuminate some of this activity which needs to be recognised by the CSCP and considered as to how it fits into the wider continuum of need.

4.2 Formal Attendance at Head Teacher Networks

Although dissemination and collation of information to and from schools is good, the CSCP recognises that there are other opportunities to ensure that all institutions feel included. Enhanced engagement through the attendance of the Safeguarding Partnerships Manager at Head Teacher Association meetings will commence to continue the two-way dialogue. This would be similar to the attendance by members of the secretariat at the regular Early Years Network meeting.

4.3 Trauma Informed Approaches

Schools and Early Years providers are part of the CSCP ambition (along with the Safeguarding Adults Board) for Calderdale to be a Trauma Informed Borough. An audit has begun to look at risk and vulnerability in adolescence, which will inform new ways of working for schools and partners agencies. The Early Years sector leaders are producing a briefing about trauma in early childhood and its effects on later life. The CSCP focus on transition and the intention for children to become safe, resilient adults will impact on safeguarding advice and guidance for schools, and the CSCP Young Advisors Manifesto will signify what is important to young people and the Calderdale they want to live in.

The CSCP remains committed to using intelligence, learning and evidence from the education sector to inform how professionals in Calderdale can work together to improve outcomes for children, young people and families in Calderdale.