

SERVICES FOR SCHOOLS

# Safeguarding

Learning lessons across Hampshire and the  
Isle of Wight

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# Learning Lessons

This paper seeks to support education leaders and practitioners across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight in learning lessons from recent individual case reviews and education setting reviews, in order to further strengthen safeguarding practice. It draws on a selection of recommendations which have been made as a result of Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews undertaken or commissioned by the



Hampshire and Isle of Wight Safeguarding Partnerships (HSCP and IoWSCP). The purpose of such reviews is to identify improvements to be made to better safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to seek to prevent or reduce the risk of recurrence of similar incidents. Reviews have a multi-agency dimension, underlying the imperative for partners to work together to safeguard and protect our children.

Additionally, this paper also draws on some recommendations which have been made to local schools following safeguarding reviews carried out by HIAS (Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service).

In order to maximise the impact of the paper across education settings, senior leaders are asked to ensure it is distributed widely within their setting, including all frontline practitioners and those with governance oversight.

A reminder that all education settings should be familiar with and adhere to the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (KCSiE) 2021 and that practice should be underpinned by the document 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (WTtSC) 2018. Links to these are included later in this paper.

## **Learning from recent Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews**

**Recommendation One:** Standard operating procedures, for example the procedure for non-attendance in an education setting, should acknowledge and respond to contextual safeguarding, recognising that variation in procedure may be needed to address increased levels of vulnerability in some children.



It is important to remember that, whilst standard operating procedures which are known and applied consistently by all are important, there does sometimes need to be variation according to factors such as the needs or circumstances of the child and family. For example, a setting may have a policy whereby a child's unexplained absence is followed up on the same day with a telephone call to the home. When there is no response to that contact, or the response is not satisfactory, there will be clear actions identified as to next steps within the setting's procedures. These will often include defined timescales. For the majority of children, these timescales are appropriate; however, settings do need to consider the child and family circumstances at that time and whether adaptations therefore need to be made in response to those. For example, if a child is open to social care or there are factors which may lead to a referral, such as concerns relating to domestic abuse or parental ill-health, there may be a need to adjust the standard response to an unexplained absence. This recommendation is about being alert to child and family circumstance and applying standard procedures within the context of that knowledge and in a responsive manner. More on contextual safeguarding can be found here: [contextual safeguarding](#).

**Recommendation Two:** Education settings should ensure that child protection records are transferred in a timely fashion at points of transition, in accordance with KCSiE.

It is critical that information of a child protection nature is transferred in a timely manner when a child moves from one setting to another. Information should be shared as soon as the child is on the roll of a new setting, so that from day one, anyone working with the child for the first time is aware of relevant background and contextual matters. Best practice suggests contact is made by the previous setting to the new setting ahead of transfer to alert them to any child protection concerns. It is also recommended that the old setting requests written/dated acknowledgement of receipt of child protection information once it arrives with the new setting. Information sharing between partners and settings is a hugely important factor in helping us all protect and safeguard children. This recommendation from a case arose because a receiving setting may well have made different decisions and swifter interventions had it been aware of an extremely vulnerable child's background, including family circumstances, mental ill-health and risk of exploitation.



**Recommendation Three:** The local safeguarding partnership is to consider providing training and development for professionals working with parents/carers who may seek to manipulate and deceive. This should include the phenomenon first described by Reder and Duncan (1999) as 'closure', 'flight' and 'disguised compliance'.

Disguised compliance involves a parent/carer giving the appearance of co-operating with agencies to avoid raising suspicions, to allay professional concerns and ultimately to diffuse professional intervention. Sometimes practitioners are over optimistic about parents'/carers' progress and ability to care for the child or their

promises to engage with services. Practitioners may also rationalise behaviours and/or put them in the context of what they think is 'a good family' or an 'open home/school relationship' and this can sometimes influence their decisions adversely, for example whether or not to refer a concern. Over optimism and wrongly finding an 'explanation' which prevents a practitioner making a referral can be a result of manipulation through what appears to be a positive relationship with the practitioner and/or a willingness to comply. HSCP has a 'Spotlight on Disguised Compliance' which can be found here: [Disguised Compliance HSCP](#)

**Recommendation Four:** Partners are to remind practitioners of their role in contributing to assessments of parenting, that no one agency will have all the information and that by contributing, all partners will have a better understanding of the assessed need.



Once again, this recommendation is fundamentally about partners/agencies working together and sharing information to give a rounded and comprehensive picture, which can guide the type and extent of support and/or intervention from which a family may benefit. Of importance is the engagement of all

education settings in the various discussions, meetings and report submissions which support the understanding and assessment of need. The Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton (HIPS) procedures for information sharing can be found here: [HIPS Info sharing](#)

**Recommendation Five:** Ensure the voice and experience of the child is taken into account in all work undertaken by partner agencies with families.

A child's lived experiences should be at the centre of our information gathering and our decision-making. Wider than safeguarding, settings should be committed to finding out about and understanding the experiences and perceptions of their children; this is a key factor in establishing a positive culture within the setting, as well as building a curriculum and wider provision which meets the needs and interests of children. More specifically to protect and safeguard children, their voice and experiences shed light on their home circumstances, their social encounters, their well-being and mental health. Settings should proactively consider how they are enabling and promoting children's voices to be heard. This is not just about what children say, it is also about their behaviours and attitudes. Child voice is therefore not necessarily verbal; it can be captured in other ways, including consideration of what their behaviours may be communicating. The HIPS website has a helpful section on a child-centred approach to safeguarding which can be found here: [HIPS child-centred safeguarding](#)

**Recommendation Six:** Partner agencies should review their recording standards and ensure that expectations regarding the quality of recording, including how the child's voice is recorded, are made clear to practitioners. Each agency should ensure that recording is meaningful, understood and embedded within training and practice.



Strong record-keeping systems are fundamental to good, effective safeguarding practice. Systems should be clear, known to all staff and detailed within the setting's child protection policy/procedures. Records should provide detail where possible, always be dated and reflect decisions/actions taken, the rationale for those and any outcomes, including where no further action is deemed the appropriate course. Capturing the child's lived experience and their voice should be a fundamental part of any recording system; some education settings now include a section specifically for this in recording templates/online systems in order to prompt practitioners to capture the child's voice. Settings need to consider how the quality of recording is sampled and how the outcomes of monitoring/quality assurance are used to inform future training and practice.

**Recommendation Seven:** Agencies need to review their IT systems to assess if the appropriate information is recorded or can be recorded for children on child protection plans and those on care orders but placed at home.

This recommendation has links to recommendation six. Whichever recording system is used, settings need to be able to capture and access important information easily. This would include any record of a child on a child protection plan, or known to have been on a plan previously, or a looked after child in whatever form that takes.



**Recommendation Eight:** Ensure a holistic view is taken of the child/family to try to fully understand what is going on, rather than just the presenting issue.

This recommendation is about looking beyond presenting issues, often presenting behaviours, to understand any triggers or causal factors. It will invariably involve looking not just at the child with the presenting issue but that child's family and potentially their peer group within the education setting. Information sharing is once again important; this will support and enhance the holistic view and hopefully give a more rounded, insightful, and accurate picture of the situation.

**Recommendation Nine:** Further promotion of the early help offer for adolescents and benefits of early help for adolescents is required, particularly with secondary schools.



Education settings working with adolescents are reminded of the HSCP and IoWSCP Safeguarding Adolescents Toolkit which can be found here: [HSCP adolescent toolkit](#).

Early Help is not just for younger children and their families; adolescents and their families can very much benefit too. To find out more about the Early Help offer in Hampshire, follow this link:

[FISH](#) or this link: [HSCP Early Help](#). For the Early Help offer on the Isle of Wight, please use this link: [IoW Early Help](#). All practitioners should be aware of the Early Help offer and be able to signpost to it.

**Recommendation Ten:** Partners should ensure families are fully supported to follow up on signposted services, rather than presumptions being made.

Education settings play an important role in helping families to access the support they need. Sometimes, accessing support can be daunting for a family or circumstances are such that the family finds it difficult to organise time. There may be a distrust of professionals, or the family may feel intimidated by professionals or perceived authority. Education settings often enjoy strong relationships with their families and have more frequent contact with them than other agencies, particularly at the younger age ranges. Education settings can therefore play a key role in offering reassurance to families about the support available to them and can help keep their access to services on track.



## **Learning from school safeguarding reviews**

**Recommendation Eleven:** Safeguarding concerns must be recorded in one central place through an agreed system which is known to and used by all staff.

One system, consistently used by all, is critical. Recording concerns in more than one place can lead to practitioners failing to spot patterns or trends because some of



the information is recorded separately, with a danger that not all information will be brought together to inform decision-making. It is important that the procedure for recording concerns is documented, known to all and implemented with consistency. This should be monitored as part of the quality assurance process in respect of safeguarding effectiveness.

**Recommendation Twelve:** The school should seek further training for staff on the themes of disguised compliance and the dangers of ‘norming’ on perceived behaviours within the community and/or the typical behaviours of a particular family.

Disguised compliance is referenced above. Care must be taken not to stereotype behaviours, for example relating to localities such as ‘that notorious estate’, and/or to normalise behaviours due to the perceived prevalence of them in those localities. Unfortunately, some families do move in and out of the social care system over lengthy periods, unable to sustain improvements previously secured. In these situations, it is important that agencies do re-REFER if it is felt that the family context has changed and there is cause for current concern, albeit that these may be the same concerns as previously which have re-emerged.

**Recommendation Thirteen:** Referrals relating to child protection concerns must be made appropriately and in a timely fashion; if in any doubt as to whether to refer, the lead professional can contact the professionals’ line to seek guidance.

Practitioners sometimes face a dilemma as to whether or not a concern meets the threshold for referral. The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Thresholds Chart can help and should be referenced when completing a referral. The chart can be found here: [Thresholds Chart](#). There is sometimes uncertainty as to whether talking to the family about the concern and/or consideration of a referral might compromise the child’s safety further and/or put the integrity of any subsequent investigation in jeopardy. Professionals have the child protection enquiries line available to them and are encouraged to use it. Through this telephone facility, professionals are able to seek advice and guidance on the appropriate course of action from experts in their field. Contact details for child protection enquiries are included at the end of this paper for Hampshire and separately for the Isle of Wight. Action/decisions should be taken on the same day that a concern is raised.

**Recommendation Fourteen:** Reduced-hours provision can present additional safeguarding risk which should be considered and documented when the decision to temporarily reduce access to full-time education is taken.



Any reduction in time spent in school generally means there is less opportunity for 'professional eyes' to be on the child. It also gives greater opportunity for children, particularly in the older age groups, to engage in other activity, often unsupervised and sometimes outside the home, which may compromise their

protection and safety. Particular care should be taken when making a decision to reduce provision in cases where the child is already open to social care. Reduced hours provision should only ever be used as a short-term intervention as part of a child's support package and should have the agreement of the parent/carer. Schools should report reduced hours provision to the Inclusion Support Service (Hampshire) using this link for an initial report: [RHP Initial](#), and this link for any updates/removal from reduced hours: [RHP update](#). For the Isle of Wight, schools should report to the Education Inclusion Service (EIS) using the link to report and update on reduced hours provision here: [IoW RHP](#).

**Recommendation Fifteen:** Ensure the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is clearly understood by all and forms part of their job description; appropriate accountability and performance measures should also be in place, commensurate with this aspect of their overall role.

The role of the DSL is arguably the most important one in any education setting and as such should be a post of seniority. The DSL must be trained and can access subsequent refresher training through the annual DSL conference, facilitated jointly by the Local Partnerships and HIAS. The role is clearly defined within KCSiE and this should be reflected in the person's job description and their performance review. Consideration must also be given to the time and resource needed for the DSL to fulfil the role effectively. Settings should make arrangements in the event that the DSL is not available. Most settings, and certainly those with larger numbers of children, now have at least one deputy DSL or a team of DSLs. With the latter arrangement, there needs to be clarity as to who has overall responsibility, as there have been instances where a case has fallen between DSLs within a team, each believing the other is leading on it. Everyone working and volunteering in the school needs to be clear about the DSL role and the postholder's name. This, along with contact details, should also be available publicly, for example on the setting's website.

**Recommendation Sixteen:** Secure a robust process for monitoring the effectiveness of safeguarding practice across the school; there should be a system in place to monitor, gather evidence and evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding over the course of the year and this should be used to inform the annual audit return.

Education settings should have systems in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the full range of their provision and practice. Schools will, for example, have a process whereby the quality of provision and outcomes in respect of each subject area is systematically monitored using a range of activities

throughout the year, with this information then used to inform judgements as to effectiveness and next steps for further improvement. The same systems need to be in place to enable education settings to undertake accurate self-assessments of safeguarding practice. The Hampshire safeguarding audit tool is a useful resource which can help settings to structure their evidence gathering in respect of the various aspects of safeguarding. For example, some schools take different aspects of the audit tool, such as safe recruitment, as a theme to monitor and evaluate within an identified half term on a rolling programme. This then generates sufficient evidence to complete the summative audit return required by HSCP/loWSCP annually. The optional audit tool can be found here: [HSCP audit](#).



**Recommendation Seventeen:** Consider how the self-assessment and self-evaluation processes relating to safeguarding in the school may be strengthened, enriched and validated through the addition of further internal and external scrutiny of judgements and supporting evidence.

As with all self-assessment, the outcome is only as accurate, reflective, representative and measured as the system that supports it and the person that undertakes it. As for all other aspects of a setting's performance that are subject to monitoring and evaluation, the effectiveness of safeguarding is best judged through the triangulation of evidence by more than one person and can be further strengthened by external scrutiny. The latter may be through peer-to-peer work with another external colleague or setting, or may be through a commission, such as HIAS.

**Recommendation Eighteen:** Secure appropriate governance oversight of safeguarding policy and its effective implementation in practice.

Governing bodies, or the equivalent, should play a key role in the oversight of safeguarding, with recommendations six and seven above having as much relevance to them as to the lead professionals in the setting. KCSiE clarifies the role of governing bodies or their equivalents well. Ways in which that role can be carried out include scrutiny of evidence gathering alongside lead professionals, triangulation of evidence through governors' own monitoring, being an integral part of the auditing process, and ensuring frequent and comprehensive reporting of safeguarding provision and practice to the relevant body. Governing bodies can access training on their roles and responsibilities, including in respect of their safeguarding duties. See the training section for training through Hampshire Governor Services.



**Recommendation Nineteen:** Take action in response to the Ofsted review of peer-on-peer abuse in schools and be able to demonstrate the positive impact of the school's actions on the safeguarding culture and practice across the school.

All settings should be able to demonstrate the action they have taken in response to Ofsted's review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges which can be found here: [Ofsted Review June 21](#). This should include how well safeguarding guidance and processes are understood between schools, colleges and multi-agency partners, and any action being taken to strengthen partnership working.

**Recommendation Twenty:** Staff, including the headteacher and DSL, require further training on the importance of multi-agency working and, in particular, on the significance of information sharing across agencies. It is strongly recommended that this training is delivered by an external professional, with urgency.

The importance of information sharing is well documented within this paper but the



message really cannot be said enough; despite information sharing featuring as a learning point in the majority of serious case reviews locally and nationally over many years, it remains a recurring theme for all agencies to consider and act upon. Settings are once again reminded of the jigsaw analogy, whereby you may well have many of the jigsaw pieces, but without all the pieces, some of which are held by other

agencies, you do not have the full picture and may make assumptions which lead you to a distorted or incorrect picture. Remember that making a referral is a way of ensuring that information from various agencies is being brought together in one place.

## **Training**

Training opportunities are available through:

- HSCP here - [HSCP training](#)
- IoWSCP here - [IoWSCP training](#)
- Hampshire Teaching and Learning College here - [HTLC](#)
- Governor Services here - [Hampshire Governor Services](#)
- Hampshire Services for Young Children here - [SfYC training](#)



## **Key documents and useful websites**

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021 – [KCSiE 21](#)

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 – [WTtSC 18](#)

HCC safeguarding children in education website, including model policies and the audit tool – [HCC safeguarding in education](#)

Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership – [HSCP](#)

Isle of Wight Safeguarding Children Partnership – [IoWSCP](#)

Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton Safeguarding Procedures – [HIPS](#)

HIAS, to subscribe to HIAS publications, including 'Safeguarding Matters' which is available twice per year – [HIAS](#)

NSPCC – [NSPCC](#)

## **Good Practice**

Partners have a duty to ensure that learning from Local Safeguarding Children Practice Reviews is disseminated. It is also important, however, to capture, acknowledge, share and learn from positive, successful practice which has made a difference to a child and their family. The Learning and Inquiry groups (LIG) of both HSCP and IoWSCP are very keen to hear of positive stories and good practice in respect of agencies working together to protect and safeguard children. If you have a documented



case study involving positive, multi-agency work which you would like to share, please send it to Karen Nye ([Karen.1.Nye@hants.gov.uk](mailto:Karen.1.Nye@hants.gov.uk)), who is the safeguarding lead for the Education and Inclusion Branch of Children's Services and who is the education representative for LIG.

## **Concerns**

As always, if you have an immediate concern about a child, you should follow the usual process of contacting Children's Services.

To report child welfare or safeguarding concerns, please complete the Inter-Agency Referral Form - [IARF](#)

For child protection enquiries, professionals in Hampshire can call the Children's Reception Team (CRT) on 01329 225379 or 0300 555 1373 (Out of Hours).

For child protection enquiries, professionals on the Isle of Wight can call the Children's Reception Team (CRT) on 0300 300 0901 or 0300 555 1373 (Out of Hours).

The Hampshire, IoW and Children's Trust [Thresholds Chart](#) can help you identify the risks and types of services a family may need.

To share non-urgent information with the police, please complete the Community Partnership Information form - [CPI](#)

In an emergency, please call the police on 999.