REPORT TO BARNSLEY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

Meeting:	Barnsley Safeguarding Children Partnership
Subject/Report Title:	S.175 Audit 2022 - 2023 Findings
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Status of report:	Not confidential / For Information

1.	**Purpose of the Report**	
	Schools and colleges have a statutory duty under Working Together to Safeguard Children and Section 175 of the Education Act (2002) to provide assurance to the BSCP about arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Assurance is primarily provided through completion of the annual self-assessed Section 175 safeguarding audit. This comprehensive annual audit captures qualitative and quantitative data intelligence and serves as schools' mechanism for safeguarding reporting as well as building "Ofsted readiness" in safeguarding. Analysis of the s.175 Audit returns enables the Barnsley Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP) to review compliance and the effectiveness of schools' safeguarding arrangements, to gather local data from settings across the borough, and to identify trends and areas for improvement.	
2.	**Proposals/ Recommendations/ Action required**	
	The following recommendations should be considered by the Partnership: • Creation of a half-term data record by BSCP to aid DSLs in annual s.175 audit completion. • Schools to provide assurance for incomplete policies data to the Schools' Alliance (30th September 2024). • BSCP and the Schools' Alliance to discuss how best to remove barriers to partnership engagement, with schools that are not currently linked in with local initiatives or procedures. • The Early Start and Families Service to liaise with private nurseries and early years settings to improve timeliness of safeguarding information sharing with primary schools. • Schools' Governance and Alliance Board Manager to complete targeted work with the 7 schools who did not discuss the s.175 findings with their governing body. • LADOs to investigate the recording of allegations and incidents against staff at identified secondaries, to provide LADO training as required and ensure uniformity between reported figures and LADO contacts. • BSCP to undertake targeted work with the 5 schools who are unaware of the Escalations policy. To be included in individual school action plans. • Targeted promotion of multiagency training, including GCP2, to schools where there are gaps in take up and delivery. • The Early Start and Families Service to investigate EHA figures provided by schools, triangulate data and formulate actions based on results. • Full year school attendance at conferencing and core groups is an objective at the BSCP Partnership Engagement Task and Finish Group.	

	- BSCP to liaise with the Integrated Front Door Service Manager for a common definition of 'timeliness' of responses from the IFD. - Clarification of the 'Contextual Safeguarding – Other' field. S.175 data to be shared with the BSafe Team for triangulation and information-sharing. - Clarify 'outside of school' issues in guidance for s.175 audit 2023/24. Identify and liaise with Partner agencies who also promote online safety messages in the community: Targeted Early Help, Family Hubs, Health Visitors and Police. - To develop a consistent approach to incidents of bullying, School Alliance Cluster Leads / Primary and Secondary Heads representatives to clarify and agree shared terminology relating to bullying incidents and reporting; to consider drawing up a shared list of categories for recoding incidents to be used by schools across the borough.
3.	**Background Information** The audit contains 97 questions covering key areas of compliance, policy, training and reporting of safeguarding concerns. The blank s.175 audit is attached at Appendix B. **Methodology & Challenges** The s.175 audit was sent to 93 schools and colleges in the borough, which included 2 smaller independent specialist provisions who had not previously participated in the audit. We are happy to report a 100% return from all settings and would like to thank all DSLs for their valuable contributions to the audit, providing an in-depth self-assessment of safeguarding in Barnsley settings. The audit was carried out online, using Smart Survey. 5 schools (from one Multi-Academy Trust) submitted audits using a format that is incompatible with automatic data. The settings were: 77 primary, 10 secondary, 1 all through school, 4 special/alternative provision and 1 post-16 only, Barnsley College. The audit period is the academic year 2022 – 2023. As per the recommendation for an earlier s.175 report last year, the agreed timeline was for the audit to start on the 31 August 2023, with an end date of 30 November. The majority (79%) met the deadline, with most of the remaining 19 schools submitting before the end of January 2024. One primary school submitted their audit after results analysis had commenced and was therefore used for compliance purposes only. Challenges from missing data last year have been largely overcome by 95% of schools submitting their audit via Smart Survey, as the online process restricts submission with blank data fields. A few completion issues remain with saved data; we are looking at ways of resolving this by exploring the potential of using MS Forms for the 2023/24 audit, along with a recommendation of a data recording document for DSL use every half-term, to help manage workloads. Six schools gave incomplete audits; Two are main providers of specialist provision in the borough, therefore analysis of bullying and violent incident data for special schools is limited in the findings document for 2022/23. Collaborative work with their Trust is planned for 2024 to ensure a full dataset is collected from these schools in future. Ahead of this years' self-assessment we consulted with DSLs to streamline questions, adding in options to reduce completion time. Variability was reduced this year through guidance to accompany the audit link, which included definitions of terms such as 'bullying' and 'online harms'. A webinar walk-through was also offered to all DSLs to support them with their self-assessments. Before finalisation of the findings report, a preview session was offered to a DSLs group in the Primary and Secondary Heads Schools' Alliance group, to help shape recommendations. The meeting was very productive and resulted in several developments that will support DSLs to improve safeguarding practice.

Findings

Findings are presented in detail in Appendix A, which is designed in booklet form to encourage sharing amongst professionals.

Compliance

- A high level of compliance continues across schools' safeguarding frameworks. There have been significant quantitative improvements in the updating of individual policies: when considering that most policies are on a biennial update schedule, 94% of individual policies are up to date, from 84% in 21/22. The number of settings with fully 'up to date' policies (i.e. updated *every* policy within the past two years) has risen from 43% to 78% in 22/23.
- Reporting mechanisms are in place across the borough; staff can identify safeguarding concerns and know how to report and record them. Visitors, volunteers and peripatetic staff on school sites are identified in all schools, inducted in the school's safeguarding procedures, and, if not DBS checked, are accompanied at all times.
- There were some gaps which have identified recommendations: twelve schools mentioned Early Years Settings as an area for improvement for information sharing, six schools said that last year's s.175 had not been discussed with their governing body, and nine schools had out of date (pre-September 2020) individual policies. A targeted approach for improvement is recommended for individual schools in these areas.

Allegations and Escalations

- Thirty-five settings reported allegations against staff, an increase of 6 schools on last year. There is a wide variation in the number of allegations in individual secondary schools, resulting in a recommendation for further investigation and training by LADOs.
- Settings which used the Escalations policy have increased, with 21 schools reporting 30 instances to resolve professional disagreements. 5 schools said that they were unaware of the Escalations policy. Targeted work is recommended with those schools.

Early Help Assessments and Team Around the Family meetings

- 2328 EHAs were reported across the period, a 10% increase on last year. Secondary schools saw a greater increase in their number of EHAs than primary schools. 62% of schools lead at least one of their EHAs.
- A new question this year was in relation to the number of EHAs completed specifically for ASDAT / ADHD referrals, with no other concerns. 24% of total EHAs met this criteria.
- There is a disparity between the numbers of EHAs in schools recorded by the Early Start and Families Service, and those in s.175 reporting. It is recommended that further work be undertaken to triangulate data results, to ensure that all Early Help Assessments undertaken by schools are reported and logged with Children's Services.
- 5985 TAF meetings were reported, an increase of 14% from 21/22 figures. The main increase in meetings occurred in secondaries, where there were 37% more TAFs in secondary schools across this period, compared to 6% more in primaries.
- Clear scope for improvement was identified for feedback from the Integrated Front Door to schools: 70% of schools said that they only 'sometimes' received timely feedback following a referral, with 12% of schools saying that it was never received. The definition of 'timeliness' needs to be understood in the first instance (see report recommendations), with clarification around IFD timescales to be sent to DSLs to ensure an objective measure in data collection.

Safeguarding Training

The graphs in the findings document, page 15 & 16 (Appendix A) show a significant increase in safeguarding training in six key areas: contextual safeguarding, Child Sexual Exploitation, Child Criminal Exploitation, Harmful Sexual Behaviour, Prevent and Online Harms. Neglect was added as a separate field this year, as the most frequently occurring field in referrals. Only 7 schools did not provide a breakdown of numbers of staff trained in specific areas, in comparison with an average of 13 schools (14%) last year.

- Prevent training has the highest compliance and is a mandatory government requirement. However, it is unclear whether this is generic Prevent training or the bespoke Barnsley training offer.
- No single area stands out as the weakest. This is a positive step forward from last year when contextual safeguarding was identified as a clear training gap and suggests that the targeted follow-up with individual schools has been effective.

It is clear that individual feedback provided to schools, and resultant tracking by BSCP and the Schools' Alliance, has had a positive impact on training figures and in particular, to last year's recommendation of increased Online Harms training.

Safeguarding Referrals

Schools were asked to report how many referrals they had made where any of the six key areas identified earlier were a consideration. MACE was also added as an area this year for information sharing with BSafe, the new South Yorkshire Police / Barnsley Council multiagency exploitation team, for triangulation purposes.

- Numbers of referrals have increased in the top two categories, Contextual Safeguarding: Other (83 referrals from 24 schools to 92 referrals from 30 schools) and Harmful Sexual Behaviour (55 referrals from 20 schools to 66 referrals from 19 schools).
- Referrals for Child Criminal Exploitation have halved, from 44 in 21/22 to 22 this year. It is possible that there is crossover from this field to the generic 'Contextual Safeguarding: Other'. Safeguarding categories for referrals will be reviewed for next years' self-assessment, with clear definitions (see recommendations).
- Although there has been a 10% increase in referrals for harm outside the home overall, 53% of schools made no referrals in any contextual safeguarding field this year. Whilst the increase in training and policy updates is welcome, it has not yet translated into significantly greater reporting.
- The number of referrals for online harms from secondary schools has risen this year by 71%, from 14 to 24 referrals. These results are more in-line with national trends and findings relating to online harms, where it is suggested that children from the age of 11-13 are most at risk of being sexually abused online.

Online Safety

- In the 2022/23 s.175 guidance, BSCP provided clarification of what constitutes an 'incident'. Consequently, there was an increase in the number of online harms incidents reported.
- 77% of all schools reported having online harms incidents, either requiring an in-school response or a referral to the Integrated Front Door – a modest rise from 68% in 21/22.
- The number of schools with 0 reported incidents is down from 32% (in 21/22) to 23% this year.
- Last year, the number of secondary / post-16 / special schools reporting online harms incidents seemed low compared to trends highlighted in national data. This year, only 2 special schools, with low pupil numbers, said they had 0 online harms incidents.

- Although 21 primary schools (32%) reported no online harms incidents, some of these schools then described dealing with online harms incidents in the comments box; this leads to the recommendation that *School Alliance Cluster Leads / Primary and Secondary Heads representatives to clarify and agree shared terminology* in this report.
- 16 primary schools and 1 secondary school made comment about issues from 'outside of school' then being 'brought into school' relating to online behaviour, leading to the recommendation to link in with Partner agencies who promote online safety messages in the community.

Anti-bullying

- The BSCP has worked closely with the Schools' Alliance to ensure that all schools are aware of the Anti-Bullying commitment in 22/23, with favourable results: 78% of schools promote the commitment, compared with 51% of schools last year. A refreshed version of the commitment, an updated anti-bullying strategy and a certificate to display in settings was distributed to schools in summer 2023, as well as individual feedback from last year's audit addressing each school's status of involvement. 77% of schools now report that the commitment is visible in their school.
- There is scope for closer partnership engagement with a small number of schools with a recommendation for targeted discussion.

Bullying & Violent Incidents

- 1712 bullying incidents were reported, a 27% increase on last year's figures (1349).
- 2148 violent incidents were reported in schools, down from 3824 incidents last year. However, this year's total does not include figures from two of the largest specialist provision providers in the borough, where 51% of incidents occurred last year: for primary and secondary / post-16 schools, the figure has risen by 284 incidents overall.
- Violent incidents in secondary and post-16 schools have decreased by 59%, while incidents in primary schools have increased by 66%. 47% (36) primary schools noted SEND as a factor for individual pupils who have violent and aggressive incidents (14 more than 21/22), which may account for the increase in primary school figures.
- There continued to be a broad range of reported figures for bullying, from 0 – 207 incidents. Some individual secondary schools had a dramatic reduction in bullying incidents this year, suggesting that this years' guidance of what constitutes as a 'bullying incident' has had an impact on reporting. The variation in recording would benefit from further investigation, by Schools' Alliance Cluster Leads (see recommendation).

Feedback to schools

A preview consultation session of s.175 findings was offered to DSLs in the Primary and Secondary Heads Schools' Alliance group in March 2024 (Appendix A). Next steps involve the publication and distribution of this report and findings document to all DSLs, subgroups of the Partnership, and partner agencies, in April 2024. All settings will be sent their individual results in April 2024, an activity which brought positive results after the 2021/22 audit. The BSCP has created a tracking document for progress of individual schools against their actions, which will be shared with the Schools' Alliance to take forward.

Summary

The participation of all schools and colleges in the borough in the submission of the s.175 audit, including first-time submission from 2 independent specialist provisions, emphasises their commitment to safeguarding the children that attend their settings.

	A great deal of positive change is clear from analysis of 22/23 data, when compared to that captured for the 21/22 academic year. The main theme from this year's report is that no single area stands out as being an area for blanket intervention, as Online Harms did last year; improvements moving forward will be gained through targeted work from various agencies with a small number of individual settings. This highlights the collective drive to improve safeguarding through partnership working from most schools in the district over the past year. It is clear that much positive, restorative work is being done across the borough to tackle bullying, both at strategic and practical levels. The number of schools launching their involvement with the BSCP Anti-bullying Commitment has increased, and narratives show that schools are taking the wishes and feelings of victims into account. Qualitative data results show that there is a more proactive, holistic approach to safeguarding delivery. Quantitative data suggests that improvements have been made in the collective understanding of terminology relating to incidents in schools, but discussion now needs to be undertaken by DSLs to further improve the consistency and accuracy of data submission and analysis. Triangulation of the data collected from s.175 audits by Early Help and Contextual Safeguarding multi-agency teams will be the next step in adding context to the narratives of this report and will aid the actions that result. What continues to be very evident in this year's report is the essential role that schools and colleges play in safeguarding children in the borough: from recognising the indications of harm and reporting to protect those most at risk, to supporting families at an early stage through Targeted Early Help interventions. We will continue to support settings, through close partnership working, to ensure that children are educated about risk, to be safe from harm, and continue to thrive across Barnsley.
4a	**Implications for Children, Young People and Adults** Children and young people are largely well-safeguarded by their schools, but there remain many opportunities to improve training and practice.
4b	**Partnership Implications** Safeguarding work in education settings is an integral part of the Partnership arrangements and this report identifies some priorities and recommendations for improvements in the year ahead.
5.	**LSCP Priorities** **SCP3**: Further strengthen performance management, building on ongoing work. **SCP4**: Strengthen and evidence Partnership's effectiveness through rigorous challenge, participation and engagement. **SCP5**: Ensure that the Partnership maintains a comprehensive overview of the work of partner agencies involved with safeguarding children, including the VCS and local faith groups.
6	**Financial Implications** Any increase in the Partnership training offer would have a cost implication.
7.	**Attachments** Appendix A – Findings in full Appendix B – Blank 2022/23 S.175 Audit Questions
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