



Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Board

Newsletter

December 2016

Update from the Chair...

Welcome to December's newsletter. It contains a great deal of information and includes a specific request from the Director of Children Services to seek improvements, where possible, in support to vulnerable families.

There has been a great deal of work done since the summer and the length of this newsletter reflects that! There are updates on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), the anti-radicalisation PREVENT programme, safeguarding in education, children affected by domestic abuse and sexting.

Portsmouth has recently undergone a peer review of its approach to tackling CSE. We are doing many things well across all agencies and the MASH was seen as particularly strong in multi-agency working and information sharing. We have also had some good advice on improving arrangements and links with health colleagues and with schools which we have already acted on.

Finally from me, you will also see additional training offers from the PSCB training team – please take up these offers where they will benefit you.

I wish you and your families a very Happy Christmas and wish you well for 2017.



PSCB Training Committee

Lunchtime Briefing sessions

The PSCB will be running a series of briefings throughout 2017. The aim of these is to help our workforce keep up to date with changes in local policy and practice, national guidance and procedures, as well as learning from local case reviews and national serious case reviews.

These 90minute sessions held over the lunchtime period will include a short presentation, with time to discuss and debate issues with colleagues from a range of agencies. They also provide an opportunity to consider how these affect the way we work with children and families in Portsmouth.

Look out for PSCB email invitations to the workshops and all information will be put on the [PSCB website training page](#).

Training courses - Child Sexual Exploitation

PSCB is currently encouraging professionals to attend training courses to help identify, assess and support children who are at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation in the city. Course feedback to date has been extremely positive

The PSCB has two courses available:

- Working with vulnerable Children (Missing, Exploited and Trafficked) classroom course
- Child Sexual Exploitation E-learning course



We would like to wish all of our colleagues a very happy Christmas and best wishes for the new year!

Operation Make Safe

In September the PSCB teamed up with colleagues from Hampshire Constabulary, Children's Social Care, Licensing and Barnardo's to raise awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) with bar staff, nightclub workers, security staff, taxi drivers, hotel workers and street pastors. Two hundred and fifty people attended these 6 workshops which aimed to help them to recognise the signs of CSE and give them the confidence to report their concerns - with the simple message 'say something if you see something'.

Safeguarding children is a shared priority with our local partners and the business community. Those working in the night-time economy are an especially integral part of identifying children who may be at risk of being sexually exploited. As part of the training a hard-hitting short film reconstructing a real-life CSE incident, which happened in Portsmouth in 2015, was shown. This film and all the other presentations from the workshops can be found on the PSCB website on the [CSE page](#) for professionals.

Rachel McKernan, Assistant Director Children's Services at Barnardo's said "Barnardo's has been working to tackle the devastating impact of child sexual exploitation for two decades. We see how this abuse inflicts devastating damage to vulnerable children and we work tirelessly to help these children pick up the pieces of their shattered lives. Events like this in Portsmouth are important for helping to raise awareness of the signs of child sexual exploitation and shows how we work alongside others to protect vulnerable children."

Cllr Ryan Brent, Portsmouth City Council's Cabinet Member for Children's Services said: "CSE is a national issue but we're determined to do our part in Portsmouth and tackle issues concerning young people being exploited. It's important we engage with people who might not realise CSE is taking place. Taxi drivers and those working in the hotel trade, for example, without knowing it could in fact witness vulnerable children involved in exploitation. We want to make sure they are aware of the signs and know who to report concerns to. I'm pleased so many trades were able to attend and can now share with colleagues the correct action to take if they suspect exploitation is taking place."

Restorative Approaches to Review Child Protection Conferences

Portsmouth is introducing a restorative approach to the way it works with families and Review Child Protection Conferences (RCPC) will be changing in February 2017. As well as changing the structure of the conference itself, the templates used by agencies to submit their information on will be different. The new templates will be available [here](#) on our website for use from 3rd January 2017 for RCPCs in February. Look out for PSCB lunch-time briefing sessions that we will be offering in January to provide awareness of the restorative changes to RCPCs and support on how to complete these new reports.

Safer Internet Day

'Be the change: unite for a better internet'

Safer Internet Day 2017 will take place on Tuesday 7th February. Safer Internet Day is celebrated globally in February each year to promote the safe and positive use of digital technology for children and young people.

Coordinated in the UK by the **UK Safer Internet Centre** the celebration sees hundreds of organisations unite to raise awareness of online safety issues and run events and activities right across the UK.



Meeting Dates 2017

The dates for all our meetings throughout 2017 have now been finalised and the electronic invites have been sent out. If you have any queries please email psc@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Web: www.portsmouthscb.org.uk Email: psc@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Early Help SAFs ... a message from Alison Jeffery, Director of Children's Social Care

It has become apparent that the number of early help SAF assessments and reviews recorded over the last six months has dropped significantly. In the period October - December 2015, 139 SAF assessments were recorded. By contrast there were only 16 in the period July - September 2016. While some seasonal fluctuation is normal (particularly during the summer holidays), there were only 19 assessments recorded in the previous quarter (April - June 2016), which points to the fall off in numbers becoming a very worrying trend.

With data telling us that there are upwards of 2,000 children in city with needs that put them at Tier 3 in terms of need and only 410 early help SAF assessments recorded since the new Single Assessment Framework was launched last year, there is a clear imperative to address the apparent shortfall in early help support for children and families with additional needs that the low number of early help SAFs suggests.

It may be the case that practitioners are undertaking the early help SAF process (assessment, planning and review) with families, but failing to send the paperwork to the MASH for recording. If you know this to be the case in your organisation, would you please ask your staff to send copies of the relevant paperwork to the MASH as soon as possible.

However, even if this is the case, we must not lose sight of the fact that even in the best-performing quarter only 139 early help SAF assessments were recorded (which is less than 10 a week) and only 410 early help assessments have been undertaken in the last 18 months, so there remains an urgent need for practitioners to engage more children and families with additional needs in the early help SAF process.

The council's Think Family Mentors (who work alongside the Early Help Support Team within the MASH) can offer practitioners advice and guidance on undertaking the early help SAF process and training is available from Portsmouth's Safeguarding Children Board (PSCB), but we also need managers to provide their teams with support and supervision in undertaking this work and challenge them when necessary.

I have asked if all colleagues could review the support being provided to vulnerable families through use of the SAF process and consider how best help to increase the number of families supported so that collectively our response can be significantly strengthened. I am sending this message out widely but I should be grateful if everyone could forward it within their networks as appropriate so that as much support can be enlisted as possible. We have reviewed the process for ensuring that the families referred to the MASH and assessed as requiring targeted early help are allocated support appropriately, and this is being rolled out quickly, initially in the North locality area and then across the city. This will help, but will not be sufficient on its own. We need everyone to get behind a concerted effort to improve our offer to families. I know that I can rely on you all to make a difference here.

Prevent Update

To discuss a concern regarding radicalisation or to make a referral, please contact the Portsmouth Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

During office hours (Monday – Friday):

Portsmouth's MASH 0845 671 0271, email pccraduty@portsmouthcc.gcsx.gov.uk

Out of Office hours: Emergency Duty Service – 0300 555 1373

If a child is at immediate risk of harm, call the Police on 999

Prevent Training

E- Learning—A new Home Office e-learning tool is aimed at those with responsibilities under the Prevent duty, particularly front line staff in schools and colleges. Please visit <https://www.elearning.prevent.homeoffice.gov.uk>.

Workshop

For staff that have significant contact with young people or have a safeguarding responsibility, we recommend attendance at a Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP) session. To book, please email Prevent Coordinator Charlie Pericleous charlie.pericleous@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Safeguarding Week 2016

The 14th to 18th November was **Safeguarding Week** in Portsmouth. As part of this the PSCB Business Team ran multi-agency workshops attended by over 100 frontline workers to support their awareness, understanding and use of the newly re-launched [Thresholds Document](#).

Messages were included in [Flagship Magazine](#) and [Term Times](#) (free magazines produced by Portsmouth City Council and distributed to residents, schools and businesses in the city). The aim being to raise awareness with members of the public of when and how to contact the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub if they are concerned that a child is at risk of harm or abuse.

During Safeguarding Week Portsmouth Hospital's Trust set up in the atrium of Queen Alexandra Hospital a presentation table with lots of resources for both visitors and staff around cyber bullying, online safety and information about recognising child sexual exploitation. Their Safeguarding Team attended the children's outpatient departments and met with children and their parents to discuss issues of online safety.

Portsmouth's Prevent Coordinator delivered briefings to raise awareness about radicalisation. Forty five people attended these including college staff, housing officers, Portsmouth Youth Voice, social care, housing, fire and rescue, Barnardo's, probation, ambulance service and schools.

NHS Portsmouth CCG Safeguarding Team supported Safeguarding Week by contacting all GPs in the city with a reminder on what they need to do if they are concerned about a child's safety, linking to the relaunched threshold document. They also sent daily updates to them on a variety of topics, including domestic abuse, bullying and sexual abuse.



During Safeguarding Week, agencies were also encouraged to use their [Power for Good](#) in recognition of the fact it was also national anti-bullying week. They were encouraged to support this by committing to writing an anti-bullying policy or refreshing their current policy. To assist settings to do this the Anti-Bullying Alliance has produced a new resource which can be found [here](#).

Hold the date - 2017 Safeguarding Week in Portsmouth will be 13th - 17th November. More information will be available soon.

Keeping Children Safe in Education

The Department for Education has published an updated version of the statutory guidance [Keeping children safe in education](#) which revises and replaces the 2015 guidance. This came into force for schools on 5 September 2016.

The September additions include sexting (see article in this newsletter about sexting) and missing children.

Here are some quick guides to the main September updates:

[Tri-x update](#)
[NSPCC update](#)

MASH Audit

A random sample of 21 MASH case analysis forms submitted between 1 and 30 June were reviewed by health and social care leads in late summer 2016. There was some very positive feedback from the review including:

- MASH decisions were clearly evidenced and well recorded
- Information shared by each agency was appropriate and contributed effectively to proportionate decision making
- There was evidence of good multi-agency working
- There was strong evidence of robust application of thresholds and consent
- The MASH process was straight forward, logical and easy to follow

The aim is to repeat this audit every 6 months

Lay-members update ...

The PSCB lay members have continued to maintain their presence at the board meetings, aiming to represent the community in discussions and decisions that are made.

They have been also been involved in recent work being done within the council around restorative practices within Portsmouth and attended a coaching session exploring this topic.

If you wish to contact any of our lay-members please contact pscbb@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Children Affected by Domestic Abuse

Children and young people can be the forgotten victims of domestic abuse. Adults often think they are protecting their children from what is happening and believe they are unaffected if they are not present during an incident. However, this is not the case. Living with abuse can be terrifying for a child and in the long-term can affect everything from how they feel, how they act at school and how they behave in their own relationships. Children of any age are affected by domestic violence and abuse. At no age will they be unaffected by what is happening, even when they are in the womb. The physical, psychological and emotional effects of domestic violence on children can be severe and long-lasting. Some children may become withdrawn and find it difficult to communicate. Others may act out the aggression they have witnessed, or blame themselves for the abuse.

In order to improve practice for children living in families where there is domestic abuse, the learning from research and serious case reviews suggests we need to support practitioners to:

Understand the roles of all adults in the family - Any assessment should include information about all members of the household, including biological parents, new partners or ex-partners who are back in the picture. Information about who lives in the home and who has contact with the children should be verified and kept up to-date. The identity of any unknown adults in the home should be investigated.

See the parent/carer alone - people who live in domestic abuse situations often live in fear for their own safety or that of their children. In such situations, it can be difficult, if not impossible, for them to speak out. Agencies must do their utmost to provide suitable opportunities for victims to disclose in private.

Avoid an over-reliance on the parent's ability to protect their children - Where the abusive partner refuses to engage with services, there is the danger that child protection plans focus too much on the victim's ability to protect their children. This can lead to an overoptimistic view of their parenting ability. When the parent responsible for the domestic abuse is not part of the child protection plan, the danger is that the risks they pose are then overlooked.

See the bigger picture - One-off incidents of domestic abuse may not meet the threshold for child protection procedures. However these incidents need to be seen within the context of what else is known about the family. Make sure you explore the "lived experience" of the victim and the "child's world" to understand what it is like in the home 24/7 as well as relevant and up-to-date information has been gathered from all agencies in contact with the family.

Maintaining a healthy scepticism - Disguised compliance is a common factor in families living with domestic abuse. In some cases, the victim of the abuse tells agencies that they are no longer in touch with their ex-partner. Only too late does it become apparent that they are still seeing each other and/or the children.

Talk about domestic abuse between agencies - Terminology used to talk about domestic abuse can be quite subjective. The danger of recording incidences as "family problems" or "arguing with partner" by some agencies minimises the seriousness of domestic violence and may lead to it not being identified as a high risk by other agencies. A decision not to charge the perpetrator following an assault may lead other agencies to conclude that the risk is lower, than if the perpetrator had been charged. Whilst information and assessments from other agencies should always be gathered, it should also be challenged, particularly in the light of new information.

Understanding the complex nature of domestic abuse relationships - Some domestic abuse relationships are characterised by separations and reconciliations. Professionals must be alert to the possibility that a separated couple may be back together and should not rely on a previous claim that the relationship had permanently ended. Professionals need to accept that leaving an abusive relationship may not be the answer for some victims and if this does happen then do not presume that the risk has reduced as in many cases this is when risk increases.

Helping the parent to understand the impact of living with domestic abuse - In some cases, the parent did not feel that their partner was at any time a risk to the children. Information should be provided to parents regarding the possible impact of domestic abuse, both emotionally and physically, on the children.

Children Affected by Domestic Abuse ... resources available

For further information visit [Safer Portsmouth Partnership](#) and [NSPCC](#). See the Domestic Violence information in our [4LSCB procedures](#). Refer to the indicators of need in the [PSCB Threshold Document](#). Read the 4LSCB practice guidance [here](#). The PSCB website has information about [services available to support families affected by domestic abuse](#).

Sexting

As part of its [Safe4me education programme](#), Hampshire Constabulary ran a competition focused on protecting young people from the life-changing dangers of sharing sexual pictures. They encouraged students to submit ideas for a public campaign that can communicate and educate the importance of safer behaviour on smartphones and online devices; avoiding an act often known as 'sexting'.

Organised by their School and Youth Engagement Coordinator, PC Maria Carrick, there were over 80 schools who registered interest and Springfield School in Portsmouth was chosen as one of the six finalists. The winners of the competition were a group of students from Robert May's School in Odiham for their original animated concept that warned of nude and sexual pictures spreading like 'Wildfire' once shared.

Maria Carrick said they organised the competition as "The concerns and consequences over these types of pictures are not always understood or reported by children." A recent survey of more than 900 students in local schools conducted by Hampshire Constabulary produced the following responses:

- 13% (of 862 who answered this question) did not think it was against the law for young people aged under 18 to take, send or share naked selfies or images of a sexual nature
- More than a third (36% of 852 who answered this question) said they or someone they knew had been involved directly or affected by sexting
- When asked if they would know what to do if sexual or naked images of you or a friend were shared with others or used against you, 40% said no



Julia Fossi, of the NSPCC who was on the judging panel, said: "Although not all children are taking part in sexting, we know through calls to ChildLine and our own research that many experience pressure to get involved. Those that do are particularly vulnerable. Young people understand the pressures to take part in sexting better than anyone else and it is therefore essential that they are involved in helping to come up with the solutions. The sexting prevention competition is a fantastic opportunity which empowers young people to support their peers around this important issue."

For more information:

- Tri.x have recently produced a useful briefing paper on [sexting](#)
- NSPCC have produced information on [how to talk to children about the risks of sexting and how to protect them](#)
- UK Council for Child Internet Safety has developed guidance on [responding to incidents of sexting in schools and colleges](#)
- The College of Policing have produced a briefing note on '[Police action in response to youth produced sexual imagery](#)'
- CEOP have produced a three-episode animated series for 8-10 year olds to help them learn how to stay safe from sexual abuse, exploitation and other risks they might encounter online - [Play Like Share](#)

Acknowledgements

Some of the photographs used in this publication have been downloaded free of charge from [freedigitalphotos.net](#)