

Safeguarding

Newsletter 10

www.boarding.org.uk

Dealing with disclosures

NSPCC recently launched a new resource called '**Let children know you're listening**'.

This aims to address the difficulties encountered by professionals when dealing with disclosures or potential disclosures. BSA member schools contributed to the "Professionals breaking the silence" research which led to this new development. The research indicated that, whereas 80% of professionals said they felt confident dealing with a disclosure, 70% felt they would benefit from further training. The research was informed by both adult and child viewpoints and has led to the development of a three-stage process, OPEN UP, SLOW DOWN and REFLECT BACK. Schools may wish to consider how to promote this revised strategy to their staff. The materials are available at www.nspcc.org.uk/listen

Wales

The NSPCC resource 'Let children know you're listening' is also available in Welsh from NSPCC Cymru '**Gadewch i blant wybod eich bod yn gwrando**'

At the Cardiff launch event, Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services, Julie Morgan AM confirmed that, in line with the Social Services and Wellbeing Act Wales, new Wales protocols for safeguarding are being developed, an all-Wales practice guide is being produced and statutory guidance on child sexual exploitation is also being upgraded.

International

At the recent hearing of IICSA (Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse) into 'Protection of Children Outside the United Kingdom' Colin Bell, CEO of COBIS, lamented the fact that disclosure and barring checks (DBS) were no longer available for those working outside the UK. Jane Larsson of CIS brought to the attention of the inquiry the protocol on managing allegations which was produced by the International Task Force on Child Protection, of which both CIS and COBIS are members. Colleagues working outside the UK might like to be aware of this guidance.

Unisex toilets

Many schools have considered the use of unisex toilets, particularly as a response to concerns around gender identity. Recent press coverage highlighted a review by Women's Voices Wales which indicated that many girls are unhappy with such arrangements, because of the threat of harassment or "period shaming", and that they were avoiding going to the toilet as a result. Equally there are instances where changes to toilet provision have worked well. The key issues would seem to be firstly considering the needs of all pupils when such changes are planned, also to consult with the pupils **before** work begins, so that they have a chance to give their views, and finally to ensure provision is compliant with existing regulations. In Wales single-sex toilets are still required under the **1999 regulations** (so any unisex provision must be in addition), and in England the updated **Premises Regulations** from 2013 are clear about what is required ("the privacy of the occupant needs to be ensured"). In Scotland there was a consultation about an update to the **1967 regulations**, but these still exist. Those working elsewhere must check their local arrangements.

DSL survey

Andrew Hall from "Safeguarding in Schools" and author of *The Safeguarding Handbook* is planning to write a book for new and less-experienced Designated Safeguarding Leads and would like input from practitioners to make sure that it covers all the important topics. A survey is available at: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CSJKLW5>

Working together

Those in England should be aware Working Together to Safeguard Children had a minor update on 21st February. However, there are no changes which need action by schools, as this update relates solely to how local authorities should notify serious safeguarding incidents to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. "Working Together" is still dated July 2018. Panel chair Edward Timpson also wrote to the Secretary of State for Education announcing the first ever national child safeguarding practice review.

Brexit and Child Protection

The Children's Commissioners for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have **written to the Government** asking for clarification around a number of issues related to Brexit, not least the issues which will arise relating to international child protection, family law, the justice system and DBS checks for those who have worked in Europe.

Character and resilience

In a **widely reported speech** on 6th February, English Education Minister Damian Hinds MP highlighted the five things that he thinks are essential to building character and resilience in our schools. These are sport, creativity, performing, volunteering & membership, and the world of work, all of which are things which are often seen as the major strengths of our sector.

Health and relationships - ENGLAND

The Department for Education has published guidance for compulsory health education, compulsory relationships education for primary-age pupils and relationships and sex education (RSE) for secondary-age pupils. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/all-pupils-will-be-taught-about-mental-and-physical-wellbeing>

Health and relationships - SCOTLAND

The **2018-19 Programme for Government** includes a commitment to invest in school counselling services across education in Scotland. The **review into PSE** was completed in January 2019. The Scottish Government **Health and Wellbeing** page has a range of other updates, including on responsible use of mobile technology.

Learning from the past

BSA has consistently encouraged colleagues to confront issues relating to the non-recent abuse of children in member schools. In a recent newsletter, we promoted the boarding briefing paper authored by former BSA Chair Martin Reader, which looks at how schools can engage meaningfully with survivors of abuse. Previously BSA has highlighted learning from studies and enquiries in both Australia and USA. Many will be familiar with recent TV adverts for the Truth Project (part of IICSA), which recently published further survivor testimonies, some of which relate to boarding schools.

Richard's memory is that his mother was 'coerced' by a social worker to send him to a boarding school. **Ryan reported** the abuse to his housemaster, but nothing happened. **Jack-Bob feels** that abuse of this nature could be prevented by not permitting staff to reside on school grounds and have access to pupils. **Jenny thinks** that boarding schools should be banned – the environment makes it too easy for abusers, she says.

Whereas these testimonies make uncomfortable reading, we must continually ask ourselves the question "could it happen in our school", as the impact on victims is life-changing. 86% of survivors of abuse had experienced a negative effect on their mental health, 45% reported issues with school or employment and 34% reported issues with relationships and intimacy. 52% reported experiencing other forms of abuse in addition to child sexual abuse.

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