

Safeguarding Newsletter 12

www.boarding.org.uk

This term has been an extremely busy one, so there is much to catch up on before we all break for Christmas!

Dealing with peer-on-peer abuse

Following the successful launch of our webinar programme, the second will be titled 'Responding to issues of peer-on-peer abuse' on January 16, 2020 and 10:30. This webinar will examine the principles and detail of the 'sexual violence and sexual harassment' guidance, the Brook traffic light tool for assessing harmful sexual behaviour and look at ways to respond, report and record any allegations. Delegates may participate live or request a recording to watch at a more convenient time. This webinar will be hosted by Dale Wilkins, Director of Safeguarding, Standards and Training for the BSA. [Click here to book now.](#)

Lessons from IICSA

BSA attended the whole first week of the IICSA phase one hearing into residential schools, which was held in early October, and monitored the proceedings of the second week, which focused mainly on residential special schools. BSA gave evidence at the end of the first week, and there was also evidence from DfE, Ofsted, ISI, NSPCC, and the Office of the Children's Commissioner, as well as closer to home from both AEGIS and AGBIS.

The proceedings rightly focused on specific cases of those who had been abused in a residential setting. When trying to achieve best outcomes for our current boarders, we must never forget the impact of such abuse on those who are victims and survivors, no matter how long ago the abuse happened.

Broader themes being discussed at IICSA included the following:

- The concept of quality standards as opposed to minimum standards. What are the benefits and how could they be introduced?
- The role of school Governors, particularly regarding training, and whether there should be specific safeguarding requirements
- The role of the independent listener, and the balance between usefulness, approachability and being totally separate from the school
- Whether there should be an "independent visitor"
- The robustness of the inspection process as a whole
- The status of guardianship and the regulation around it (or lack of it)

- Relationships between independent schools and their local authority
- Boarding school culture regarding harmful sexual behaviours.

BSA has been asked to give evidence in phase two, which will run from May 11-22, 2020. IICSA will also be running a hearing into effective leadership of child protection, with a preliminary hearing scheduled for February 25, 2020.

Online Sexual Harm

As part of its work, IICSA has published research into online sexual harm. This will be of interest to both those within England and Wales and beyond. It can be accessed via [the IICSA website](#).

Office of the Children's Commissioner

BSA held a very productive meeting with the Office of the Children's Commissioner in early December. The meeting included a discussion of the "Help at Hand" service, to which boarders are connected if they call the number posted on boarding houses in accordance with the requirements of NMS 2.3 in England ("Boarders are also provided with one or more appropriate helpline(s) or outside telephone numbers, including the Office of the Children's Commissioner, to contact in case of problems or distress."). It was established that, although boarders make up a small proportion of those using the service, the "Help at Hand" service does receive calls from boarders in schools and will handle these in a number of ways, which might include offering direct support and advice to the young person or following up issues with the relevant Headteacher or DSL. Under certain circumstances, of course, if the relevant thresholds are met, matters will be referred on to the relevant social care department. The service can also be accessed by email, and more modern methods are being considered.

BSA was able to confirm that the contact number is prominently displayed in almost all schools we visit. Information about the service, along with links to posters and other materials [are available here](#). BSA undertook to conduct some research in member schools to find discover levels of awareness of the service, and to find out more comprehensively who children turn to when they need help and guidance. This will take place next term, with a view to having feedback available before the next IICSA hearing in May.

Scotland

BSA is corresponding with SCAI (Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry) and is liaising with SCIS on matters relating to the inquiry. The hearing will be in the summer of 2020, but no date has yet been set. Both BSA and SCIS are also communicating with the Care Inspectorate and a very helpful meeting was held in late October. Scottish members will hopefully be aware of the training event being run by SCIS on 'January 28, 2020 in Dunblane on the new inspection framework for Scotland. See the SCIS website for details.

'Stop It Now Scotland' has launched Upstream, a new [online resource on the prevention of child online sexual abuse](#), which is available on the website

Wales

BSA is delighted to be working more closely with WISC to support the needs and requirements of member schools in the Wales. Welsh members will hopefully be aware of changes to the launch of the [Wales Safeguarding Procedures](#) on November 11, 2019 and to a raft of other child safeguarding guidance which was published on November 4, 2019, some of which is relevant to schools. Details can be found on the [gov.wales safeguarding page](#). There was also a consultation recently on the key "Keeping Learners Safe" document. BSA and WISC will circulate updates as and when available.

Independent Listener

BSA is receiving lots of enquiries regarding the independent listener service in schools. This is a specific requirement in schools in England, under NMS 2.3, and in Wales (4.6 and Appendix 1) but the principles are also contained within the Health and Social Care Standards (primarily parts 2 and 3) in Scotland. Schools in Ireland, Northern Ireland and worldwide often have a similar arrangement:

Key queries include:

- When is an independent listener truly independent?
- Can an independent listener be paid?
- Can a school counsellor be the independent listener?

The key concern seems to be that, the better and more engaged an independent listener is, the more connected to the school, and less truly independent they seem to be. Conversely, having a phone number on a board which the pupils will never call, for a person they have never met is nominally compliant, but does not best meet the needs of the boarders.

The two most important considerations are to ensure a school is compliant with the specific requirement of the relevant standard, but also that the service "works" for the boarders. In the best practice seen by BSA on school visits, the person is made known to the boarders, is fully aware of school safeguarding processes and procedures, and knows how to respond effectively to any contact from boarders. This person, however, is in all other regards completely independent of the school, its management and governance. If the person is on the payroll, this person becomes a staff member and this would not seem to meet the needs of the NMS, at least in England. A person does, however, remain independent if they are a service provider contracted by the school rather than an employee. In this way many schools use people known to the pupils who might also provide other services, such as counselling, but who are not employees.

For schools inspected by ISI, the Inspection Commentary paragraph B15 gives further guidance on this issue. BSA is currently researching this matter, and will give further guidance when it is available.

Safeguarding Conference

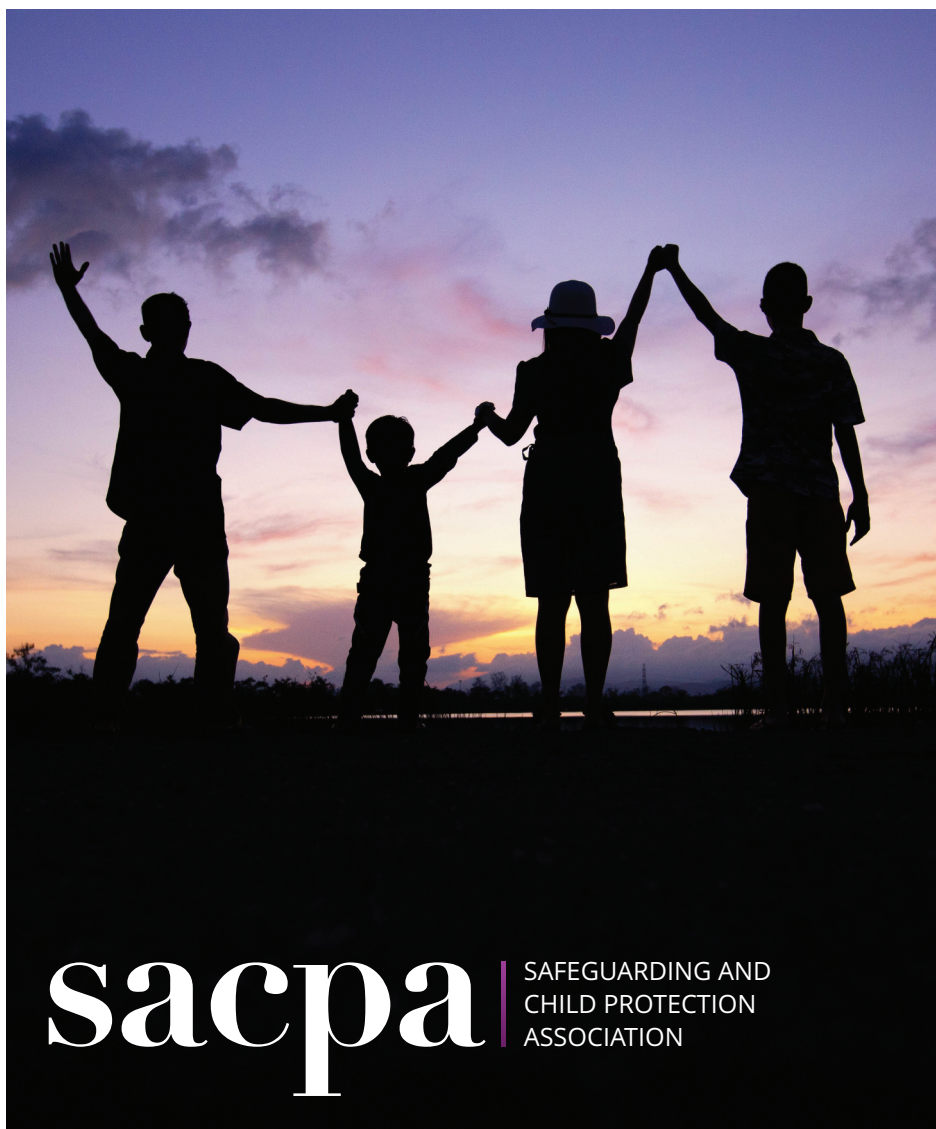
Many of you attended our annual safeguarding conference in October. Speakers included Stella James of **Gooseberry Planet**, Will Gardner OBE, CEO of **Childnet International**, Sue Duff on inspecting safeguarding and Peter Lewer on the increasingly important topic of professional supervision for boarding staff. Also presenting at the conference was DCI Brittany Clarke on the subject of County Lines. It was very informative to be able to hear of the scale of the national problem, the connection with gangs, organised crime and child sexual exploitation, and to be able to assess the level of risk to our member schools. Brittany will be presenting again at our Health and Welfare Conference in July.

The conference also featured an excellent presentation from staff and children from Queen Ethelburga's Collegiate on their "Thrive" programme. BSA is always keen to hear from member schools of initiatives which might be of interest to the wider membership. Do please let us know!

Well-being

The recent study by PISA highlighted some improvements in the performance of parts of the UK. Hidden away, however, was a small paragraph about the fact that children in the UK are less satisfied with their lives than the average for OECD countries. Whether we agree with the PISA findings or not, let us all make a New Year's resolution to prioritise health and well-being of our young people in 2020.....just as we did in 2019!!

And on that note, please look after your own well-being by having a great Christmas and New Year break, wherever you are in the world!



Also at the conference, BSA announced the 'soft' launch of the Safeguarding and Child Protection Association (Sacpa) prior to full launch in the new year. Sacpa is a sister association owned by the BSA and will act as a membership organisation to all those involved in child protection and the safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults, alongside and building on BSA's safeguarding work. Sacpa's services will include a website, regular newsletter, guidance, advice, training, resources, representation to government and an expanded Sacpa/BSA annual conference.

BSA Chief Operating Officer, Aileen Kane, is leading Sacpa as its launch Director and Dr Steve Bailey, Headmaster of Twyford School, is Chair of the Sacpa Advisory Board.

Sacpa membership is open to all individuals, groups, schools, associations or companies involved in safeguarding and child protection, including, at a 50% discount, BSA member schools, their DSLs and Safeguarding Governors. We have already received expressions of interest in membership and if you are interested in joining, or finding out more, please contact aileen.kane@sacpa.org.uk.