

Safeguarding

Newsletter 6

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BSA Chair calls for continued vigilance

In his speech to this year's conference for BSA Heads in Brighton, BSA 2018 Chair Martin Reader urged delegates to celebrate "a vision for boarding which is transformational for both our pupils and the communities in which they will take their place".

However, he also highlighted those things which threaten that vision: "It is to our great shame that there have been those adults at our schools who have used their positions of power to abuse those they were supposed to be looking after, or failed to use their positions of power to stand up against those abusers, putting school reputations before children. We are deeply sorry to the victims and survivors of the abuse that happened in our schools and are thoroughly committed to making our schools as safe as possible so that abuse is less and less likely to happen".

Martin also urged against complacency, and for schools and other providers to remain vigilant. When it comes to abusers, we must **'think the unthinkable'**: "They may appear the most trustworthy, the most committed and the best

trained. It is a genuine challenge and one that we all know we need to address to ensure the very highest standards of safeguarding at our schools. The IICSA Truth Project has shown us that we need to listen to the voice of the victims who wish schools not to act as legal entities, but to be a support to the victims themselves. Together, we need to find ways to do this, whilst still fulfilling our legal obligations, adhering to the advice of the LADOs, police investigations etc.

As we look ahead, our sector will continue to work hard to correct the wrongs of the past, and to put in place measures to safeguard and protect the children in our care. Our work with survivors, victims, charities and support networks are designed to signal a zero-tolerance approach to abuse".

Martin also highlighted the steps BSA has taken to improve our responses, including the Charter, the appointment of a Head of Safeguarding and Standards, the Forum, the Annual Safeguarding Conference and our call for Mandatory Reporting.

He concluded by saying that **"the boarding sector is rightly leading the way and in doing so we have an opportunity to share that expertise so that even in the most horrendous of situations there can arise some benefit to society. I ask all of you to keep firm that commitment to the Charter. It is a commitment to care."**



RESPONDING TO VICTIMS OF ABUSE

In recent days BSA has had a very productive meeting with Alex Renton, the investigative journalist from February's ITN 'Exposure' documentary and author of "Stiff Upper Lip". A range of topics was discussed, and the next piece of work for BSA will be a document offering more targeted advice for professionals in schools in how to respond to victims.

The first boarding-specific training session with NAPAC was held earlier this week. During this session, Jon Bird, NAPAC Head of Research and Analysis, highlighted the fact that for a survivor of abuse which took place a long time ago, the abuse can never be considered "historical", as the effects are ongoing and being felt in the present day.

BSA will be considering our terminology as a result.

RAMADAN AND BOARDING

The Holy Month for Muslims is upon us, and this year the timing is particularly challenging, taking in not only some very long days but also the examination period. There are many differing opinions among Muslim scholars regarding keeping the fast, including the age at which young people should begin fasting, circumstances when the fast can be broken and even whether taking an asthma inhaler constitutes breaking the fast. **The best advice found is that from ASCL**, which is also of value also to those not sitting exams. **NHS Choices** also has some generic advice which may be helpful. During a recent school visit, BSA also asked the Head of a Muslim boarding school for his advice.

He suggested that boarding practitioners to stay calm during the period, and to work closely with the young people, their parents and carers to allow the young people to keep their religious observance safely and spiritually.

SUICIDE RISK FROM CYBERBULLYING

Research by Professor Ann John, of the University of Swansea, indicated that victims of cyberbullying are twice as likely to attempt suicide or self-harm than their peers. The findings may not be surprising, but this study of 150,000 under-25s should serve as a timely lesson to us all of the dangers of failing to deal with bullying and cyberbullying effectively. Mental Health Awareness Week this week brings home the fact that the effects often last well into adulthood.

NSPCC has a useful resource on their website for how to help children and young people having suicidal thoughts.

SCOTS AIM TO CUT OBESITY

Following hard on the heels of the UK-wide Sugar Tax on soft drinks, which was introduced on 6 April 2018, the Scottish Government has unveiled plans to halve childhood obesity by 2030. 29% of Scottish children are currently at risk of being overweight, with 14% in danger of becoming obese.

SAFEGUARDING TRAINING AND EVENTS FROM BSA

BSA is now able to offer a range of face-to-face safeguarding training sessions which focus specifically on issues in boarding. These range from a full safeguarding course to scenario-based training and even safeguarding updates for Governors. Coming soon will be training for boarding DSLs and, in the autumn, an online resource for those "hard to reach" boarding colleagues!

The next BSA Safeguarding Forum is on June 18, 2018. Forum members will receive details by email later this week.

The Annual Safeguarding Conference will be in London on November 21, 2018.

BSA will also be co-hosting a prep school safeguarding event with IAPS in January 2019. Details to follow.