Safeguarding

Online safety and sexting audit
Summary report (August 2018)

Online safety and sexting featured strongly in the revisions to *Keeping children safe in education* (September 2016), and remains a strong feature in the September 2018 update. An audit tool was produced and circulated to all 94 providers and 70 responded; a 74.5% response rate.

Key findings

- Generally, education providers have a system for filtering in place which allows for effective monitoring. Further work needs to be done to ensure that schools commissioning the SMBC filtering and monitoring service understand better the service they have and the division of responsibilities between schools and Solihull Council (see action plan).

- On the whole, providers ensure that their systems regularly reviewed and kept up to date, so that they maintain detection accuracy.

- Whilst there is evidence of good practice of effective intervention strategies used to stop risk from escalating; there is further work to do to ensure all education providers understand how filtering/monitoring systems work, what reports from those systems show and what intervention strategies can be put in place. A lack of clarity of terminology between stakeholders ('visibility markers' or 'keywords' as an example) has led to confusion. Although the situation is likely to improve as these technologies become embedded, more work needs to be done to ensure there is more uniform understanding and consequential interventions.

- In many cases, they reverted to their child protection procedures and staff vigilance or pupil reporting. Harmful and inappropriate behaviours were seen more as child protection and managing allegations was not mentioned. We need to revisit the importance of following managing allegations as well as child protection procedures when dealing with online safety; ensuring the breadth of risk is clear and built into software (see action plan).

- Generally when intervention plans are put in place, their effectiveness is measured, however this is not consistent across all providers. There is further work to do to share some of the good practice in this area that the audit identified, and to ensure all providers fully understand this area of safety (see action plan).

- Schools are generally confident that those involved in decision making have sufficient training to make decisions based on a robust volume of evidence; and all incidents are reviewed by experts skilled in behaviour monitoring. This area will be revisited at the designated safeguarding lead conference to provide further clarity on what question 5 means, and an effective response.

- Language and cultural reference of children and young people needs to be considered when ensuring risks, irrespective of the language or cultural context are identified. Further work needs to be done in this area, and has been identified on the action plan.

- Further work needs to be done to ensure that school leaders understand the capability of detection technology to monitor static and moving images in isolation, and determine if the images are pornographic or indicative of illegal behaviour such as abuse (see action plan).

- Education providers feel confident that the scale and seriousness of safeguarding risk are appropriately considered, including illegal and life threatening activity, threats of violence, radicalisation, terrorism, substance abuse, grooming and child abuse and pornography.

- Education providers feel confident that when such risks are detected, they are dealt with in line with school safeguarding policies and child protection procedures. Education providers have ensured coverage of this when commissioning software.

- Pupils are taught how to keep safe on line through an effective PSHE curriculum.

- There are clear guidelines for pupils on the use of technology in school and beyond, including personal technology.

- Infant schools do not generally teach about sexting. The majority of schools responded that pupils know what sexting is, and are taught about this through the PSHE curriculum. An action to follow up with schools responding no, and those that have not responded has been added to the action plan.

- Parents are given advice and support to ensure their children stay safe on line and sexting particularly out of school, using local authority guidance

- A varied response to incidents of filtering in the last 12 months by individual organisations and appropriate follow up action was reported. We now need to reflect on what we can do to support schools better around acting on any filtering issues (see action plan).

- At least 83 incidents of sexting were reported across the borough in the 12 months prior to the audit being undertaken. More work needs to be undertaken to share best practice. Staff need to be reminded about not opening any sexting

material and that processes should be followed in line with KCSIE (2018) (see action plan).

- Staff are trained about online safety and sexting (eg: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/get-expert-training/keeping-children-safe-online-course).

- School leaders have accessed the information on online safety provided through the model safeguarding policy guidance and used this to support their understanding and work with staff/pupils in line with the requirements of Keeping children safe in education (2016).

- School leaders have accessed the information on sexting in the designated safeguarding lead handbook and referenced in the child protection policy, in line with the requirements of Keeping children safe in education (2016). This has been shared with all staff.

An action plan has been produced to ensure that follow up actions are in place to ensure education providers are supported to make the improvements identified.

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