SUPPORTING & ENGAGING SCHOOLS IN DECISION-MAKING & MULTI-AGENCY WORKING FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN: SCOPING THE LANDSCAPE

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ESRC funded study April 2017-October 2019 to investigate the nature and quality of:

❖ contemporary safeguarding practice within schools &
❖ schools’ engagement with other agencies in child protection practice
RATIONALE

- Over a decade since last large-scale research into schools’ engagement in safeguarding (Baginsky, 2007)
- Significant changes in legislation, policy and school & local government structures
- Limited research suggests schools often
  - lack robust arrangements for working in partnership with children’s social care services and/or
  - find it difficult to implement these arrangements effectively (Baginsky, 2007; Ward, Brown & Maskell-Graham, 2012)
- Major review identified limited inter-agency engagement by schools in the safeguarding context (Davies and Ward, 2012).
DECENTRALISATION POLICY

❖ Less prescription in statutory guidance and greater emphasis on professional judgement

❖ Devolution of threshold guidance etc to local level

❖ ‘Academisation’ agenda
  ❖ Less representation on LSCBs by academies than maintained schools (Baginsky and Holmes, 2015)
16E Local arrangements for safeguarding and promoting welfare of children

(1) The safeguarding partners for a local authority area in England must make arrangements for—
(a) the safeguarding partners, and (b) any relevant agencies that they consider appropriate, to work together in exercising their functions...

(3) In this section—“relevant agency” … means a person who—(a) is specified in regulations made by the Secretary of State, and (b) exercises functions in that area in relation to children;

“safeguarding partner”, in relation to a local authority area in England, means—
(a) the local authority;
(b) a clinical commissioning group for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area;
(c) the chief officer of police for a police area any part of which falls within the local authority area.”
Abolition of Local Safeguarding Children Boards

Omit sections 13 to 16 of the Children Act 2004 (Local Safeguarding Children Boards)
(Not yet in force)

- Uncertainty about interagency coordination structures expected to replace LSCBs
IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOLS IN IDENTIFICATION OF SAFEGUARDING ISSUES

Figure I: Percentage of referrals in the year ending 31st March by source of referral
England, 2017

- Police: 27.5%
- Schools: 17.7%
- Health services: 14.4%
- LA services: 13.6%
- Individual: 8.2%
- Other: 6.3%
- Other legal agency: 3.4%
- Education services: 2.6%
- Unknown: 2.3%
- Anonymous: 2.2%
- Housing: 1.5%
ROLE OF SCHOOLS IN RESPONDING TO / MANAGING SAFEGUARDING ISSUES

❖ Morrison, 2014: 2/3 of teachers had reported safeguarding concerns within the previous 12 months

❖ Teachers see children daily and are well-placed
  ❖ To identify changes in demeanour /appearance/ behaviour
  ❖ Develop trusting relationships with children

❖ Greater expectations post Munro 2011 in relation to role of schools in early help assessments, including as lead professionals
We have a strategy meeting and, because there's a MASH, the police are in there, health are in there, children's services are in there, but actually that's dry information…. The police give you a list of convictions, health will tell you how many hospital appointments, whether mum or dad's involved with drug or alcohol services, the school will give you the child's voice and a picture of that child to be able to build up a much better picture of what's going on in that child's life and who's around that child ….with the help of schools, we're bringing that information back into meetings within an hour, at most; faster, if it's necessary, and I'd like to believe that we've done that through all that relationship building and networks, and building up the confidence that, if we're being given that information, it's actually going to be acted upon.
METHODS

❖ **Stage 1:** Discussions with key stakeholders & experts (inc representatives of Children’s Services Departments)

❖ **Stage 2:** survey of all local authorities x3: education, children’s social care & LSCBs

❖ **Stage 3:** case studies of 5 local authorities through interviews with Head, DSL and SENCO in each of 10 schools (150 interviews); completion of Occupational Social Context measure (Glisson, Green and Williams, 2012); meetings with representatives of the CSD to discuss the survey results for that authority

❖ **Stage 4:** Bringing quantitative and qualitative data together

**Ethical approval:** King’s College London Research Ethics Committee & the Association of Directors of Children’s Services.
CURRENT STATUS

Stage 1: Interviews
❖ Education & social care representatives in 20 local authorities randomly selected by stratification on the basis of type of authority and geographic location.
❖ Expert interviews including ADCS, representatives from multi-academy trusts, NI/Scotland & Wales governments, Ofsted, specialist lawyers

Stage 2: 254 survey responses
❖ 132 (88%) of authorities/LSCBs have completed at least one survey.
❖ Completed surveys from all 3 agencies for 39 local authorities.
   ❖ Education – 93 (62%)
   ❖ Social care – 80 (53%)
   ❖ LSCB – 81 covering 87 areas (58%)
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Informed by:

❖ Complexity theory and Relational agency
❖ Typology: Hudson’s typology of partnership working
❖ The Organisational Social Context (OSC)
19 evidence reviews published 2000-2017 address ‘effectiveness’ of integrated/inter-/multi-agency working

Evidence on effectiveness of children’s services mainly from studies published before 2010

Oliver et al (2010)
- no consistency in measurement of outcomes, evidence largely practitioner perceptions
- prevalence of single site case studies
- measurement of effectiveness of school based initiatives focuses on attainment, attendance, exclusions (safeguarding not addressed specifically)

37 primary research studies published since 2010 identified
- 12 specifically address schools’/teacher engagement in multi-agency working
- Examination of serious case reviews published since 2010
EMERGING ISSUES (1) EARLY HELP

- complexity of need
- variety of models
- access to early specialist advice
- continuum of need
- expectation on schools
- thresholds?

If they don't want to engage, what do you do next, and sometimes it still doesn't meet the threshold, and it's that frustration. Some families offered early help engage, and you move them on, but some are opposed to working with us, it's those ones, those hard-to-engage families which cause schools who are anxious to play a supportive role the biggest headaches.
Stronger legislation/guidance needed:

- Home education
- Missing from education, inc those whose families are said to have returned abroad
- Alternative provision

See:

- The Home Education (Duty of Local Authorities) Bill 2017-19 (Lord Soley)

Ensuring safeguarding of EHE [elective home educated] children with non-compliant parents/carers is currently very difficult with legislation as it stands.

Clarity around ‘suitability’ of education to prevent families citing creative philosophies of education
Emerging Issues (3) Prevent

- Schools subject to duty under s26 Counter-Terrorism & Security Act 2015 to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism" (the 'Prevent duty')
- regarded as part of safeguarding – discomfort?
- schools appear to be the most prolific referrers of Prevent / Channel concerns

I don't even know if we would have had anything five years ago around that. I am not saying it wasn't there....
EMERGING ISSUES (4) TRAINING

❖ Increase in variety of models for funding and availability of independent trainers
❖ Movement away from local authority provision in some areas
  ❖ Effect of academisation on local authority capacity?
❖ But increasing need for local knowledge
❖ Concerns about online training for whole school provision
❖ Quality assurance?

School and setting DSLs have comprehensive training on the threshold document if training is delivered by the Education Safeguarding Team - if it is delivered by someone else, it may not cover local thresholds
REFERENCES