



The Ofsted review into sexual abuse in schools and colleges: Brent Safeguarding Partners support arrangements for Brent schools and colleges

The three Brent statutory safeguarding partners (Brent Council, North West London CCG and the Metropolitan Police) have worked together to ensure a partnership wide response to the recommendations made in the Ofsted review into sexual abuse in schools and colleges

1. Brent multi agency safeguarding arrangements and strengthened engagement with schools and colleges

1.1 Brent Council, North West London CCG and the Metropolitan Police in response to the new statutory guidance published in Working Together 2018 met in February 2018 to establish the Brent Safeguarding Executive Group.

1.2 The Brent Safeguarding Executive Group decided to maintain the local wider partnership of organisations working together to safeguard children, who previously met as the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. The Brent Safeguarding Executive Group established a newly constituted Brent Safeguarding Children Forum in February 2018. Representatives from Brent Primary, Secondary and Special Schools and United Colleges Group are core members of the Brent Safeguarding Children Forum and the school-based membership was expanded and strengthened in January 2021.

1.3 All Brent schools and colleges have designated safeguarding leads who meet regularly through the Brent Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) Network to discuss safeguarding issues and to receive training and support on emerging safeguarding priorities themes and trends. This network has been strengthened from the autumn 2021 term with additional Local Authority resource and senior leadership support. The school and college representative members of the Safeguarding Children Forum link into this network to enable the promotion of regular communication, challenge and support between these two groups.

2. Brent Safeguarding Partners response to the Ofsted review and the range of support available to children and young people who are victims or who perpetrate harmful sexual behaviour

2.1 The Brent Safeguarding Children Forum meeting held Thursday 22 April 2021 discussed the partnership response to the testimonies published on the 'Everyone's Invited' website and the announced Ofsted review regarding sexual harm in schools and colleges.

2.2 Brent Council officers had reviewed the testimonies on the site and provided a summary analysis of the allegations, which involved both school pupils and university students, with the majority of allegations being made by university students. Allegations from Brent school pupils included some incidents on school sites, allegations regarding unsafe personal relationships and incidents which happened off school sites, for example at parties. Council officers confirmed that any allegations relating to the local area have been followed up with the relevant institutions with the support of local agencies.

- 2.3 School representatives of the Forum confirmed that Brent school leaders had been proactive at reviewing the allegations on the website. They confirmed that schools regularly reviewed relevant school policies and procedures, ensuring that policies cover sexual violence and sexual harassment between children and referencing the relevant government advice and guidance on sexual violence and sexual harassment.
- 2.4 The response of Brent schools has been made in the context of the introduction of compulsory Relationships Education for primary pupils and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) for secondary pupils from September 2020. Brent Council developed and agreed with Brent schools in January 2020 a Brent framework for Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) which sets out the national policy, Brent's position and schools' responsibilities relating to the delivery of Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education to ensure that there is clarity and consistency of the reasons why these changes are being made and why they are important. Brent schools have made progress in implementing Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education with many schools highlighting to the Local Authority the benefits of separate gender specific sessions to address issues of safety and concern with boys and girls.
- 2.5 Brent Council circulated the letter to all headteachers from Claire Waxman, Independent Victims' Commissioner for London in response to the disclosures on the Everyone's Invited website on 22 April 2021. The letter signposted schools to resources, training and organisations to support the delivery of Relationships and Sex Education. Brent Council also circulated a list of resources and training in response to the request made in 'An Open Letter to UK Local Authorities to Support Teachers in Delivering Education on Violence Against Women, Girls and Marginalised Genders'.
- 2.6 The Strategic Director CYP Brent Council convened a meeting on 18 June with Brent secondary school headteachers to support reflection and learning from the Ofsted Review published on 10 June, with a follow on session with Brent primary school headteachers. This meeting resulted in the development by Brent secondary headteachers with the support of Brent Council officers of a pupil survey, to ask Brent pupils about their experiences of sexual harassment and abuse. This survey was distributed to pupils by Brent schools in the summer and autumn terms. Results from the survey are informing INSET days in Brent schools regarding school and partnership responses to young people's experience of sexual harassment harm and abuse.
- 2.7 A workshop following up from the discussion at the previous Brent Safeguarding Children Forum was convened by the independent convenor of the Forum on 17 June.
- 2.8 Through the workshop, Brent schools reported that multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in Brent are effective. The consultation line provided by the Brent Family Front Door is identified as particularly helpful in providing guidance but also an opportunity to have an appropriately open professional discussions about thresholds and intervention for individual children and families.
- 2.9 Metropolitan Police Safer Schools Officers are seen positively by those schools who are supported by this resource. A heightened level of engagement by the Metropolitan Police has taken place with Brent schools, primarily through Metropolitan Police Safer Schools Officers.
- 2.10 Schools can refer to CAMHS children and young people experiencing mental health problems (including depression and anxiety) as a result of harmful sexual behaviour. The Brent CAMHS team ensured early initial

communications to CAMHS staff to be alert to young people disclosing sexual harassment, harm and sexual abuse.

- 2.11 The Brent school nursing service are supporting schools regarding healthy relationships and supporting young people alongside the Schools Designated Safeguarding Leads. This includes 1:1 support and referral to voluntary sector agencies where appropriate. Monthly drop in sessions are being provided in secondary schools alongside telephone support
- 2.12 NHS providers have also taken action in response to the Ofsted review. NHS providers Safeguarding Children and Young People under the age of 18 from Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Policy has been reviewed in light of the Ofsted Review.
- 2.13 North West London CCG and NHS providers have shared information regarding the Ofsted Review with clinicians and practitioners and have also shared details of the DfE commissioned 'Report Abuse in Education' helpline and website.

3. Next steps

- 3.1 At its meeting of 1 July 2021, Safeguarding Children Forum reviewed actions being taken by Local Safeguarding Partners and schools and colleges in Brent to respond to the findings of the Ofsted thematic review.
- 3.2 Safeguarding Children Forum members also considered further actions to take in relation to the findings of the Ofsted thematic review, to support the multi-agency response in Brent, particularly in regards to listening to the experience of Brent children and young people and the strengthening of the Brent multi-agency learning and development offer.
- 3.3 There was consensus from Forum members that arrangements for listening to children and young people regarding sexual harassment and sexual abuse could be strengthened. Building on the work facilitated by Brent Council officers with Brent secondary schools, a pupil voice survey for primary aged pupils, is being developed with representatives of the Brent DSL network for distribution later in the autumn term.
- 3.4 In line with the Ofsted review findings, Forum members agreed that arrangements could be strengthened to upskill all those working with children in addressing issues of risk in the most complex of cases and supporting schools where both perpetrators and victims of abuse attended school, particularly where criminal and/or statutory safeguarding thresholds for intervention were not met.
- 3.5 Attendees also identified opportunities to develop local training, to help upskill local safeguarding partner staff in where sexual abuse may be a risk factor, particularly complex cases. A 2021/22 Section 11/175 audit being conducted by Local Safeguarding Partners and planned for circulation in the spring term 2022 will include questions focused on understanding the confidence of school staff and identifying learning and development needs.