

## **Office of the Children's Commissioner**

# **Feeling safe, keeping safe: Good practice in safeguarding and child protection in secondary schools**

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## Abbreviations

CAF	Common Assessment Framework; usually refers to an integrated assessment carried out under this framework.
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families, now Department for Education (DfE)
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board
OCC	Office of the Children's Commissioner
PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education
SCR	Serious Case Reviews
SEN	Special Educational Needs
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights

# About the Office of the Children's Commissioner

The Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) is a national organisation led by the Children's Commissioner for England, Dr Maggie Atkinson. The post of Children's Commissioner for England was established by the Children Act 2004. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) underpins and frames all of our work.

The Children's Commissioner has a duty to promote the views and interests of all children in England, in particular those whose voices are least likely to be heard, to the people who make decisions about their lives. She also has a duty to speak on behalf of all children in the UK on non-devolved issues which include immigration, for the whole of the UK, and youth justice, for England and Wales. One of the Children's Commissioner's key functions is encouraging organisations that provide services for children always to operate from the child's perspective.

Under the Children Act 2004 the Children's Commissioner is required both to publish what she finds from talking and listening to children and young people, and to draw national policymakers' and agencies' attention to the particular circumstances of a child or small group of children which should inform both policy and practice.

The Office of the Children's Commissioner has a statutory duty to highlight where we believe vulnerable children are not being treated appropriately in accordance with duties established under international and domestic legislation.

## **Our vision**

A society where children and young people's rights are realised, where their views shape decisions made about their lives and they respect the rights of others.

## **Our mission**

We will promote and protect the rights of children in England. We will do this by involving children and young people in our work and ensuring their voices are heard. We will use our statutory powers to undertake inquiries, and our position to engage, advise and influence those making decisions that affect children and young people.

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Office of the Children's Commissioner: Good Practice in Safeguarding and Child Protection in Secondary Schools

## Foreword by the Children's Commissioner

This report is the end product of a year-long piece of work examining outstanding safeguarding practice in secondary schools. This was done for the Office of the Children's Commissioner by the University of Sussex.

The report describes very good practice, found in a small but in many ways representative sample of England's secondary schools. The ingredients of good practice they found there were confirmed by a wide range of professionals, and by reports from Ofsted. One of our main objectives was to identify models and illustrations of good practice which we could share widely, which could provide both the basis for the good practice guidelines for teachers and school leaders, and be a source of reassurance, information and professional challenge to all professionals in this area. We wanted to look, from a secondary school's perspective, at both in-school practice, and at external liaison with others who help keep young people safe. The researchers looked both at safety within school, and intervention when young people are at risk of not being safe either in school, or in their lives outside. Above all, we wanted to hear what young people said made them feel safe.

The report, accompanying Guidelines for good practice and the film made with young people, taken together, highlight the sampled schools' overall approaches to safeguarding. The view we present of these schools' overall work provides a sound context within which child protection concerns were found to be more likely to be recognised, and then robustly but sensitively addressed. We present key good practice principles alongside illustrations of schools' structures, ethos and processes. Our short case studies illustrate how schools are listening to and involving their students, ensuring they can both benefit from and contribute to making their school a safe place. The sampled schools are also good practice models of schools' direct engagement in support for young people and their families.

I welcome the opportunity to offer these practical ideas and illustrations to schools, and other professionals involved in the lives of the children learning in them. Using our good practice principles and examples, other schools can now examine their own approaches, knowing others like them have good ideas to share. They can then address any parts of their work which they may need to strengthen.

I would like to thank the authors, the schools, and the young people who made it possible to produce this report. It is always good to celebrate and share illustrations of excellent practice. Of course we could have found and showcased far more examples if we had had the time and resources. We know there is a lot of good practice in the system, and that schools want to learn from each other. We trust colleagues in all secondary schools will benefit from reading about their colleagues' work, and will go on to implement the practices we present.



**Dr Maggie Atkinson**

**Children's Commissioner for England**

# Executive summary

## Background

The research reported here was commissioned by the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) to address the urgent need to support schools in developing good practice in their safeguarding role and specifically their response to child protection concerns. The focus has been on how schools can develop systems and processes to enable early identification of safeguarding needs and support young people to help keep themselves safe, rather than on schools' work with young people with existing social services involvement.

It is important at the outset to make a clear distinction between "Safeguarding" and "Child Protection", both of which terms are used frequently throughout this report. Good practice in safeguarding has a broad scope. It entails meeting statutory requirements for schools (for example, relating to safer recruitment), but goes beyond the legal mandate to address a wider range of concerns. It relates equally to all children, with a focus on prevention and fostering a culture of safety.

Work in relation to child protection sits within that broader framework of safeguarding but has a narrower focus. Child protection work focuses on those children who are suffering, or are at risk of suffering, significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect. Its primary aim is to protect these children from harm. Throughout this report, when these terms are used, it is with these definitions and at times both terms will be used in the same context.

This distinction raises an important question for the present study. Does good practice in safeguarding give rise to good practice in child protection? To what extent is the latter enabled by the former? This report offers some reflections on these questions but the limitations of the present study do not enable them to be answered fully.

The understanding and identification of child protection needs among young people in their secondary school years has been well documented as a matter for concern. The everyday contact and on-going relationships they have with their students means that school staff are uniquely well placed to identify when young people are at risk of harm. However, protection needs can be obscured if staff focus on presenting problems, for example with behaviour or school attendance, at the expense of attention to underlying issues and causes. The over-arching objective of this research was to identify characteristics of good practice in child protection in secondary school settings, with a specific focus on the identification of and early intervention with potential child protection concerns.

## Methods

Research was carried out in six schools, selected as exemplars of well-developed practice in relation to safeguarding and child protection. Schools spanned four local authority areas, and were selected to ensure a mix in school type, geographic area, and local authority type. Good practice was identified through a scoping review of schools and local authorities, and local authority stakeholders further advised on selection of case study schools.

Individual and group interviews were conducted with: local authority personnel (including representatives of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and service managers or other senior staff with responsibility either for safeguarding within secondary schools or children's

social care); school staff (including those designated to take lead responsibility for dealing with child protection issues); school governors; and young people's groups in schools and local authority areas (including consultative groups, school councils and peer mentoring groups).

Interviews were analysed thematically in relation to the study objectives.

## **Key findings**

This research did not seek to evaluate the effectiveness of the systems and practices reported in the case study schools or local authorities. Rather the study aimed to learn from their lived experience of developing recognised good practice in this critical area.

Whilst recognising that caveat, the research identified highly consistent themes that spanned diverse schools and case study areas, highlighting strategies, principles and processes which were believed to support good child protection practice, within overall safeguarding approaches, in secondary school contexts.

Participants in this study, young people and professionals alike, spoke with enthusiasm and pride about approaches which they saw as working particularly well in their school or local region.

Characteristics of Good Practice:

- The case study local authorities and schools involved in this study all had robust policies and procedures, rooted in statutory guidance, embedded across their systems and which were providing a solid underpinning to their work. But good practice was consistently described as going 'over and above' the statutory minimum requirements, to develop creative, participatory, strategic and responsive innovations.
- Whole staff training in schools was seen as key to embedding understanding of child protection within the school, and to assist with recognition of need among staff (from bus drivers and non-teaching staff through all levels of teaching staff to senior leaders) who spend time with students in their everyday school lives.
- Adults and young people consistently emphasised the importance of creating a school environment where young people feel comfortable to reveal their safeguarding concerns – to adult staff or to fellow students – and where students are known well enough for undisclosed concerns to be recognised by adults. Good practice arrangements enabled staff to have regular formal and informal contact with students.
- The differing demographic contexts and forms of governance within which schools operated highlighted the importance of flexible approaches, responsive to local need within a wider policy framework and social environment. Good practice is not necessarily more likely to take place in any particular type of school.

- The commitment and strategic vision of senior managers in schools and local authorities was seen as critical in developing a culture within which safeguarding and children’s wellbeing were central priorities, especially in a time of change, where both schools and local authorities are operating in the midst of significant financial constraints combined with a rapidly changing policy context.
- Frameworks for partnership and integrated working, supported by Local Safeguarding Children’s Boards, played a key role in facilitating communication, common understandings and priorities. This relationship-based way of working promoted the development of a learning culture within a local authority area and ‘a community of schools’, fostering the sharing of good practice and consultation about concerns and leading to earlier identification and intervention.
- Dedicated local authority roles that combined safeguarding and education expertise, and which often spanned primary and secondary school provision, were used in training and advisory capacities to support good practice in child protection in schools. Cross-area and cross-school approaches can also support the effective use of resources.
- Emphasis on integrated working, and on whole family approaches to understanding child protection in the localities studied, served to highlight the need to consider child protection and safeguarding as spanning the whole pupil journey through primary and secondary schools. Unifying roles and structures – such as the LSCB, or local authority staff working across primary and secondary schools – helped achieve this integrated understanding.
- Across stakeholder groups, there was wide recognition of the significant pressures on staff in secondary schools, particularly in relation to the size and perceived complexity of secondary schools (as compared to primary schools), and the perceived impact of academic attainment and performance measures on teachers’ capacity to attend to children’s wider needs.
- School staff may feel ill-equipped to assess child protection concerns, and it was therefore important to ensure access to informal advice and support within schools as well as ensuring strong formal communication networks for onward referral.
- Student and professional stakeholders, across case study areas, consistently emphasised the need to think broadly about child protection and safeguarding, as part of the spectrum of young people’s safety and wellbeing in the school and community. This broad understanding of safeguarding was also helpful in situating child protection within school’s key priority areas, year on year.
- At secondary school level it was seen as particularly important to build students’ awareness of, and language for talking about, child protection risks. The approaches taken varied, but examples included discussion embedded in the curriculum (e.g. within PSHE) and cross-school and within school events, such as commissioned drama productions.
- The development of student-led and student-centred approaches within schools and local authorities was seen as fundamental to the development of good practice in child protection in secondary schools, for example, through student involvement in the development of policy and systems, and in peer mentoring and support as part of



frameworks to support identification of needs.

- Peer mentoring schemes played a very valuable role in facilitating an atmosphere of trust and safety within some schools, making it more likely that concerns or difficulties will be identified at an early stage. However, they were not seen as appropriate in all schools. Training, support, supervision and clear processes are essential, to ensure that student-to-student support can function appropriately as a route to safeguarding.

### **Good Practice principles**

The principles identified by this study – and particularly, the emphasis on integrated working, on participatory and student-centred working, and on situating child protection within a broad understanding of safeguarding – are not new. Indeed, current school and local authority systems had clearly been built on histories of investment in these key areas of children's lives.

The challenge for schools and local authorities is to maintain and extend existing good practice in financially challenging and organisationally uncertain and rapidly changing times. Child protection in secondary schools is often seen as a neglected and challenging area of practice. The experience of participants in our case studies suggests the value of working to overcome such challenges.

Key principles for policy and practice development are as follows.

1. Child protection in schools is given strategic priority by leaders in schools and local authorities. At a time of change and financial pressure for education and other children's services this both protects existing good practice and drives forward improvements in this key area of practice. This will include schools examining their approaches to child protection as part of internal self-assessment processes.
2. Safeguarding is a shared responsibility for all those working in the school and all staff understand how their role contributes to the overall work of the school in supporting and protecting its students.
3. Strong communication networks between schools and local authorities assist with recognising risk and determining thresholds and enable empathic consideration of possible underlying meanings of problematic behaviour by young people. Cross-area and cross-school approaches to child protection, such as a centralised advisory service and dedicated safeguarding roles, support the effective use of resources in a time of economic constraint.
4. Schools and local authorities have established systems for regular on-going training and professional development of all staff who have contact with young people, as well as systems that ensure accessible consultation and support for any staff in schools who may be in a position to identify child protection concerns.
5. Schools systems enable staff to get to know their students well, through regular formal and informal contact within the school, and assist staff in identifying child protection needs.

6. Attending to students' welfare in the broadest sense goes alongside explicit attention to specific child protection needs. As a result, students are aware of potential risks, and have the language to voice concerns, at a stage in life when they are likely to encounter new potential risks, but are also developing increasing agency and responsibility.
7. A student-centred and participatory ethos is key to ensuring student welfare and wellbeing. The benefits of genuinely participatory approaches, as reported by both adults and young people, depend on the strategic prioritisation of child-centred working, and dedicated investment of time, training and resources.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 The structure of this report

Following this introduction which explains the aims and focus of this study, chapter two, Building on Solid Foundations, looks at structural frameworks and initiatives within schools and local authorities that went beyond statutory requirements to support their work (within and across agencies) in relation to child protection and safeguarding in schools.

Chapter three, Holistic Approaches to Safety and Wellbeing, considers how child protection and safeguarding can be supported by being situated within a broader conceptual frame concerned with young people's safety and well-being. Chapter four, Young People at the Centre of Good Practice, is specifically concerned with the role of young people in supporting safety and well-being within schools, through frameworks for youth participation in decision making, and through active roles within schools – such as peer mentoring. Chapter five ends the report with a synthesis of key findings and implications for policy and practice development. The research methods are detailed in Appendix 1

## 1.2 The aims and focus of this study

Good practice in safeguarding has a broad scope. It entails meeting statutory requirements for schools (for example, relating to safer recruitment) but goes beyond the legal mandate to address a wider range of concerns. Work in relation to child protection – work to protect children who are suffering, or at risk of, significant harm – sits within that broader framework of safeguarding. This distinction raises an important question for the present study. Does good practice in safeguarding give rise to good practice in child protection, specifically? To what extent is the latter enabled by the former? This report offers some reflections on these questions but the limitations of the present study do not enable them to be answered fully.

The understanding and identification of child protection needs among young people in their secondary school years is well documented as a matter for concern in both policy and academic literatures. Schools are uniquely well placed to identify need and risk of harm because of their everyday contact and on-going relationships with young people. However, and especially for secondary school-aged children, protection needs can be obscured if professionals focus on presenting problems, for example with behaviour or school attendance, at the expense of attention to underlying issues.

There is an urgent need for good practice guidelines that build on successful experiences to inform better identification and support for child protection needs among secondary school-aged children. This research reported here aims to address that need. In reading this report, it is therefore important to recognise that the focus of the work was not on schools' work with young people with existing social services involvement (e.g. Children in Need or Looked After Children), but had a specific focus on practices to support identification and early intervention in relation to child protection concerns.

The underpinning aim of the research was to inform the development of good practice in

child protection in secondary schools, through case studies of schools and local authorities that were identified as having well-developed work in this critical area.

To meet this broad objective, the study addressed the following specific sub-objectives:

1. To situate analysis of good practice in secondary schools within academic and policy literature and practice guidance from education, social work and related fields in relation to safeguarding, inter-professional working and child protection in schools.
2. To identify good practice case studies by:
  - Identifying local authority areas with evidence of well-developed services in relation to child protection for secondary school-aged children
  - Identifying secondary schools within those authorities that exemplify good practice in relation to child protection and safeguarding; and/or have well-developed systems to prioritise children and young people's involvement in the development and scrutiny of school policies and systems.
3. To gain an in-depth view of the characteristics and development of good practice in a small number of schools, by analysing multiple perspectives from key stakeholders in schools – young people, parents (in their role as parent-governors), and professionals – and other relevant bodies within the local authority area (young people and professionals), in order to:
  - examine how schools ensure young people's awareness of and engagement with child protection processes in the school;
  - identify models of good practice in relation to child protection, including student involvement in the development of process and policies, and interagency involvement with school child protection practice; and
  - identify school and local authority level systems that facilitate the development and maintenance of good practice in child protection in schools (e.g. in relation to training of staff or information sharing between schools and other stakeholders).

The background and context for this study follows, setting out the nature of child protection and safeguarding needs in relation to young people and the role of secondary schools in identifying and managing risk.

### **1.3 The child protection and safeguarding needs of young people in secondary schools**

*Child maltreatment is often considered something that only happens to young children. [...] Adolescent maltreatment has received very little attention in UK literature or policy – research on maltreatment has tended to treat all children up to the age of 18 as a homogeneous group.*  
(Stein et al 2009, p2)

A substantial body of work has highlighted a critical need for policy and services in the UK to

attend to the understanding and identification of child protection concerns for young people in their secondary school years. A recent prevalence study identified that six per cent of young people aged 11–17 had experienced some form of maltreatment from a caregiver within the previous year (Radford et al, 2011).

Older young people comprise a large proportion of children in need and children who are 'looked after' within England. In 2011, 49% of children in need<sup>1</sup> and 43% of young people<sup>2</sup> who entered the care system were aged 10 years or more. Teenagers also comprise a large proportion of those subject to Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) which are carried out when abuse and neglect are known or suspected factors when a child dies, or is seriously injured or harmed (Brandon et al 2008).

The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups is an important source of evidence concerning peer on peer exploitation, including in school settings. The Inquiry has uncovered numerous examples of sexual bullying as well as cases where victims of sexual assault were excluded on the grounds of sexual misconduct. Sexual exploitation can take place at any time of day and is not confined to night-time activity. The Inquiry highlights the need for schools to be hyper-alert to the risks children face when they go missing from school. This may be a sign that they are already a victim or they may be at risk of becoming a victim of sexual exploitation (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2012).

However, child protection concerns in respect of young people in their secondary school years appear to be less well recognised and less well attended to than is the case for younger children. There is a risk that the identification of child protection concerns in young people could be obscured by constructions of 'challenging' or problematic behaviour. Boddy and colleagues (2009) analysed central government SDA903 data on young people entering care, and found that – while abuse and neglect comprised the most common recorded reason for placement – young people who entered care for the first time aged between 10 and 15 years were more likely than those who entered care earlier to have the reason for placement recorded as due to family problems or to the young person's behaviour.

At the same time, the separation of 'troubled' and 'troubling' behaviour is rarely tidy in practice. Stein and colleagues (e.g. Stein et al, 2009; Hicks and Stein, 2010; Rees et al, 2011) have written extensively on the 'neglect of neglect' in this age group. A literature review on adolescent neglect concluded that there are important differences in the way neglect might be identified at different stages of childhood (Rees et al, 2011). The same is of course true for other child protection concerns. Especially for older children, signs of maltreatment can be masked by other presenting difficulties, such as emotional or behavioural problems. An analysis of Serious Case Reviews revealed that, in the one quarter of cases which involved young people aged 11 or older, these young people had been characterised as 'hard to help', despite extensive agency involvement; the authors commented that young people who had 'lived with significant harm for many years carry the effects of abuse with them' (Brandon et al, 2008, p.104).

Whilst Serious Care Reviews represent the extreme of child protection concerns, other

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<sup>1</sup> Source: DfE children in need statistics for 31 March 2011  
<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d001041/index.shtml>

<sup>2</sup> Source: DfE looked after children statistics for 31 March 2011  
<http://www.education.gov.uk/researchandstatistics/datasets/a00196857/children-looked-after-by-las-in-england>

studies have reported similar connections between young people's presenting emotional or behavioural problems and underlying child protection concerns (e.g. Biehal, 2005, 2008; Baginsky, 2007). Perceptions of relative vulnerability and the ways in which a young person's manner, appearance and conduct might be interpreted by school staff appears to be a significant factor. A teacher interviewed by Baginsky (2007, p62) observed:

*Where teenagers are concerned the idea of 'children in need' just does not get picked up. There has to be a physical sign or symptom or a disclosure before the systems kick in.*

Boddy and colleagues' (2012) study of families involved with intensive family intervention services provided further evidence of this pattern. Problems that triggered referral – including young people's risk taking and criminal behaviour – were often rooted in complex and chronic family difficulties, including child protection concerns and parental drug and alcohol dependency.

Adolescent males may be particularly at risk of misidentification of need in their experience of childhood adversity. Holta and colleagues' (2008) study of young people's responses to domestic violence indicated that, for boys, anxiety and distress tended to manifest more in externalising behaviours such as hostility and aggression; girls were more likely to internalise their responses through anxiety, depression and somatic complaints, that are perhaps more readily identified as rooted in problematic experiences.

Together, this body of evidence highlights the need for services to attend to young people's perspectives on their difficulties. In one striking example in Boddy and colleagues' recent study (2012, p 63, edited extract), a young woman gave an eloquent account of her experiences:

*I've watched my mum's drinking since I was about five or six. But I didn't know what it was. It's growing up... it's like as you grow up the wider your eyes get. ... And it was all coming to me, like it all started registering the older I got and I just realised ... the drink was affecting my mum badly and the weed [I was smoking] was affecting me. And when I mean we'd fight, like full on fight, up and down this passage, everything and it was only I went on internet, went on socialservices.com like and I looked it up. I got the number for the homeless. They put me through to [social service office].*

Examples such as this raise compelling questions about the role of schools and other universal services in identifying need, by listening – and working together to respond – to young people's concerns.

#### **1.4 The role of schools**

Rees and colleagues (2011) advocated an ecological or multi-systemic approach to intervention with young people who have experienced neglect, following from Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological systems theory. Schools comprise a key context for children's lives and so, within an ecological systems approach to child protection, schools should play a central role in identification of child protection needs and in support for young people. The role of schools in child safeguarding is well-established, and school staff are uniquely well placed to identify need because of their everyday knowledge of the young people with whom they work – as was highlighted in the Munro Review.

In her 2010 report, Munro cautioned that:

*Professionals in universal services cannot and should not replace the function of social work, but they do need to be able to understand, engage and think professionally about the children, young people and families they are working with.*  
(Munro, 2010, p.26)

What does this advice mean for the ways in which schools work with children's safeguarding needs? Schools have a range of statutory duties in relation to safeguarding and child protection, as set out in the Education Act 2002 and in a range of subsequent guidance (e.g. DCSF 2010; Ofsted 2011a; DfE 2013). It is beyond the scope of this report to attempt to summarise the detail of this guidance, but the definition of safeguarding set out in the DCSF 2010 *Working Together To Safeguard Children* guidance, and adopted by Ofsted in their report on good practice in safeguarding in schools, provided the contextual frame for the present study.

The updated and more abbreviated version of this guidance has subsequently been published as DfE (2013) and continues to emphasise the roles schools have in:

- creating and maintaining a safe learning environment for children and young people; and
- identifying where there are child welfare concerns and taking action to address them, in partnership with other organisations where appropriate.

However, the 2010 guidance more fully elaborates the safeguarding role for schools, setting out a number of ways in which schools might fulfil these duties:

- using the curriculum (particularly the non-statutory framework for personal, social and health education (PSHE) to develop young people's understanding, awareness and resilience so that they are better able to judge risks to themselves and take appropriate action to help keep themselves safe;
- having effective measures to address bullying and cyber-bullying as well as other forms of abuse by peers or adults within the school setting;
- identifying welfare concerns, and indicators of possible abuse or neglect, at an early stage and referring these for further investigation to the appropriate organisation, normally local authority children's social care;
- contributing to the assessment of students' needs and, where appropriate, to on-going action to meet those needs (DCSF 2010, pp.77–78).

PSHE provides an important opportunity for learning about healthy relationships and to challenge the pervasive influence of pornography on young people. The work of the Office of the Children's Commissioner on the impact of pornography as part of the Inquiry into sexual exploitation in gangs and groups has led to the recommendation that the school curriculum include 'relationship and sex education' which addresses these issues (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2013).

The Ofsted 'best practice' guidance (2011a, p.6) further states that inspection judgements of safeguarding should take account of the following areas of work.

- The impact of safeguarding arrangements on outcomes for pupils, including staying

safe, being healthy, making a positive contribution, enjoying and achieving, and developing skills for economic wellbeing.

- How well pupils are taught to keep themselves safe.
- How well the school protects pupils from bullying, racist abuse, harassment or discrimination, and promotes good behaviour.
- The effectiveness of health and safety policies and procedures, including conducting necessary risk assessments as well as regular checks on equipment and premises.
- The effectiveness of arrangements to provide a safe environment and secure school site.
- How well the school meets the needs of pupils with medical conditions.
- How appropriately child welfare and child protection concerns are identified and responded to by the school.
- How effectively the school works with key agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- How well the school prioritises safeguarding, and monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of its policies and practices.
- The extent to which the school ensures that adults working with children are appropriately recruited and vetted, and receive appropriate training, guidance, support and supervision to undertake the effective safeguarding of pupils.

As these examples indicate, good practice in safeguarding has a broad scope. It entails meeting statutory requirements for schools (for example, relating to safer recruitment), but goes beyond the legal mandate to address a wider range of concerns.

As detailed above, work in relation to child protection – work to protect children who are suffering, or at risk of, significant harm – sits within that broader framework of safeguarding. This distinction raises an important question for the present study. Does good practice in safeguarding give rise to good practice in child protection, specifically? To what extent is the latter enabled by the former?

We might expect good child protection practice to be valued where the overall approach to safeguarding in school was a high priority. This is supported by comments recorded in chapters which follow. The present study cannot provide evidence to support this in terms of outcomes for children but aims to promote reflection by school leadership and staff on the connections between the two in their school.

Research has consistently shown that child protection work in schools is not straightforward (e.g. Baginsky, 2007; Gilbert et al, 2009; Munro 2010). Baginsky (2007) reported that school staff often struggled to know how to make sense of worrying behaviours in teenagers, such as depression or self-harming, in the absence of a clear disclosure or abusive event. This leaves the school to make a complex, finely balanced decision about when a threshold has been reached for information to be shared with other agencies.



Psychosocial perspectives (Cooper and Lousada, 2005) suggest that it is common for professionals who feel bombarded with children's pain, anger and fear to defend against it in some way, perhaps cutting off from it, so that they do not feel it. Such defences were thought to be operating in situations where professional failings have contributed to children dying at the hands of parents or carers (Rustin, 2005). Good supervision which attends to the emotional and subjective dimension may support school staff in more fully engaging with and responding to the experiences of young people (Ferguson, 2005; Baginsky, 2007). Such reflection should also assist school staff in uncovering errors in their decision-making processes which are based on bias, subjectivity and faulty thinking (Munro 2011). Staff need supervision, training, guidance and support on making these decisions, and co-operative work across agencies to define consensual thresholds (Baginsky, 2007).

Alongside definitional and conceptual ambiguities about what constitutes a child protection concern, there are structural and practical barriers to inter-professional working, such as high service thresholds, differences in professional understandings, lack of time, lack of communication, and training needs (e.g. Frost and Stein, 2009; Oliver et al, 2010; Munro, 2011). Such barriers must be recognised, but are not insurmountable, and highlight the importance of the current study in developing clear guidelines that draw on good practice.

This study's focus on good practice is particularly valuable in a context where research on child protection within schools has sometimes focused more on difficulties than potential solutions (e.g. Gilbert et al, 2009), or has neglected young people's perspectives and expertise in their own lives. Good practice examples exist, for example in studies of social care and extended services involvement in schools (e.g. Cummings et al, 2007; Wilkin et al, 2008). However, to understand good practice in child protection in secondary schools we must go beyond attention to structural frameworks – for example, in relation to inter-agency and inter-professional working – to attend to conceptualisations of maltreatment, and of children and young people, within the school, and to understand the processes of change by which good practice has been achieved.

## **1.5 Disclosure and identification of need**

Davies and Ward's (2012) *Safeguarding Children* research overview reported that, since 1997, there has been a significant drop in children and young people's self-reports of experiences of harsh emotional and physical treatment and physical and sexual violence. The authors queried whether this patterning reflects a real drop in the numbers of young people experiencing abuse or, whether fewer young people feel confident to disclose maltreatment. If the latter, then this has important implications for early identification of child protection needs. Ways must be found to facilitate young people to disclose abusive experiences and for adults (and particularly professionals who have contact with children in their everyday lives) to be able to recognise need and identify accurately when young people are potentially at risk of harm, and to act on this. As noted earlier, schools should be in a pivotal position in this regard.

In England, almost 370,000 children and young people were identified as Children in Need on the census day of 31 March 2012, of whom nearly 180,000 were aged 10 years or more.<sup>3</sup> For these individuals, staff in their schools (e.g. the designated teacher with responsibility for safeguarding) will work as part of the inter-agency context and contribute to assessments,

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<sup>3</sup> Children in Need defined under Section 17 of the 1989 Children Act. Source: Characteristics of children in need in England, DfE. Available at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/researchandstatistics/datasets/a00215043/characteristics-children-in-need>

planning and reviews, while work is led by children's social care. However, when child protection concerns first surface, or when concerns do not reach thresholds for children's social care, school staff are likely to play a critical role in identifying needs and activating support.

## 1.6 Identifying good practice

The literature summarised above has highlighted the particular complexities of identifying child protection needs amongst secondary school-aged young people, including the risk that those needs may be missed when professionals fail to attend to the reasons for presenting problems such as poor attendance, risk-taking behaviour, or emotional and behavioural difficulties. To avoid this risk – of missing, or misconstruing, child protection needs – attention to children's own perspectives is critically important.

Researchers such as Holland (2001; 2009) and Gorin (2004) have highlighted the value of attending to children's expertise and to the diversity of childhoods, noting that young people growing up in difficult circumstances have often already been negotiating complex responsibilities and want to be informed and involved in decision making. This body of literature indicates that good practice in child protection in secondary schools would entail a wider culture of listening, encompassing rights to protection and participation, as set out in the 1989 *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* ( Articles 12,13, and 19).

Powell and Smith (2006, p.135) argued that 'the structural vulnerability of children' is a reflection of 'children's lack of power and status within our societal structures'. While these authors were discussing children and young people's positioning in discourses about research ethics, their comments are highly relevant to the core concerns of the current study. This research aimed to produce good practice guidelines for schools and other relevant stakeholders that will help schools to overcome the 'structural vulnerability' of children. This involves examples of existing good practice, but also requires an understanding of how schools can move to create a trusting and empowering culture that enables young people's help-seeking and identification of concerns.

Young people's perspectives are crucial for the present study because good practice in child protection depends inescapably on professional respect for children's own understandings and opinions. Holland (2001, p.322) observed that young people were often reduced to 'minor characters' in assessment reports of their child protection needs, and this inattention is likely to cause problems for identification and intervention with child protection concerns.

In 2004, the National Children's Bureau sought young people's views on how assessments under the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)<sup>4</sup> were being conducted. Their responses – summarised in Figure 1 – remain equally relevant today in highlighting the concerns of young people in disclosing or discussing safeguarding or child protection concerns.

### Figure 1: What young people thought would be the World's Worst CAF Assessor

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<sup>4</sup> The CAF is a standardised and integrated way of delivering frontline services which are focused around the identification of additional needs in children and young people. Families and professionals work together to decide how these needs should best be met. More details at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/strategy/integratedworking/caf>

(NCB, 2004)

- *Too official, patronising, intimidating*
- *Laughing at you and the problem, derogatory remarks*
- *Tells you what to do instead of advising*
- *Having no opinion, sits on the wall too much*
- *No manners*
- *Drones on, keeps talking over you*
- *Thinks they are better than you*
- *No consideration for you*
- *Lack of attention*
- *'My way or the highway' attitude*
- *Brands all children and young people with the same brush*
- *Treats you like you are stupid*
- *No intention of helping you – going through the motions*
- *No heart in their job – just a salary*
- *Do what you don't want them to do*
- *Blackmail you*
- *No consideration of the personality of the young person*
- *Not like you at all*
- *Gossip about you*
- *Turn up late and answer their phone while talking to you*
- *Doesn't give you the attention you need*
- *Refers to others' problems in order to resolve yours*

Key features of good practice in relation to safeguarding and child protection have been documented in previous studies (e.g. Cummings et al, 2007) and this literature informed the selection of case study schools for the present study. These include local authority and school level structures, such as established systems for integrated working between schools and other key services, including health (e.g. school nursing) and social care services (Chase et al, 2010). As Cummings et al (2007, p.56) observed:

*The accessibility to children of professionals other than teachers makes it more likely that difficulties in their lives will be identified. The professionals are then able to work together and work with the child and family to remove or ameliorate these difficulties.*

Examples of good practice in this regard can be identified by drawing on information from Ofsted inspections of schools and local authority children's services, and identifying case studies within local authorities and/or Children's Trusts that have documented well-developed practice. Particularly relevant in this context are the models of good practice identified among Local Safeguarding Children's Boards by Ofsted (2011a), which include examples of the involvement of children and young people in developing and scrutinising safeguarding systems.

Moreover, as noted earlier, child protection sits within a broader framework of safeguarding and this implies a wider concern with young people's position within schools. This analysis implies that the study should take broad account of the extent to which young people participate in schools' policies and decision-making, for example as framed in relation to UNICEF's *Rights Respecting Schools* framework (see Sebba and Robinson, 2010).

Achieving the child-centred system advocated by Munro (2011) requires that children's perspectives are at the centre of good practice.

## 1.7 About the research

**For a full account of the methods used in this research, please see Appendix 1.**

The research adopted a case study approach, focused on six schools that were selected as exemplars of well-developed practice in relation to safeguarding and child protection<sup>5</sup>. Schools spanned four local authority areas, and were selected to ensure a mix in school type, geographic area, and local authority type. Good practice was identified through a scoping review of schools and local authorities, and local authority stakeholders further advised on selection of case study schools.

In **LA 1**, a unitary authority, two co-educational academies were selected. Both were identified from Ofsted inspection and local stakeholder recommendations as leading examples in the local area of work within a broader frame of safeguarding, participation and student well-being – for example, in relation to anti-bullying and peer mentoring work. These were also the smallest schools in our sample, with student populations of less than 500.

In **LA2**, a county council, the school selected was a co-educational selective grammar school situated in a small town. This school was identified in relation to its reputation for work to support the overall emotional wellbeing of pupils. This school has a student population of approximately 1200 young people.

In **LA3**, a London borough, one of the selected schools was a single sex (girls) comprehensive, with a population of just under 1000 students, of whom a high proportion are from minority ethnic groups. This school was rated as outstanding by Ofsted and recommended by local authority stakeholders. The second school in LA3 was a faith-based academy combining primary and secondary provision, with over 1000 students across the school as a whole.

In **LA4**, a county council, a co-educational comprehensive was selected on the basis of recommendation from local authority stakeholders and Ofsted inspection as having particular strengths in relation to safeguarding and student wellbeing, supported by peer mentoring and good school-parent partnerships. This school has a population of almost 1000 students.

Reflecting their differing location and school types, the schools also differed in their student intake. The two academies in LA1 were non-selective and drew pupils in from the surrounding town and villages. By contrast, the selective grammar school in LA2 admitted students on the basis of an entrance exam, and pupils often travelled long distances to get to school. The London based schools had much more varied student populations. The girls' school, for example, had more than 40 feeder primary schools.

Varying student populations also corresponded to variations in student need or vulnerability to disadvantage. Unlike all other schools included in the study, there were no children on child protection plans in the selective grammar. In both of the London schools, 50 per cent of students were eligible for free school meals. Both London schools had student populations from diverse backgrounds and ethnic groups (the girls' comprehensive had a

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<sup>5</sup> It is important to be clear that we do not present these schools as being in any way representative of the population of secondary schools as a whole. However, they do represent good practice in a variety of different circumstances.

high proportion of Bangladeshi and Somalian pupils). Figure 1 below summaries the key characteristics of each school. As detailed in Figure 1, individual and group interviews were conducted with: local authority personnel; school staff; school governors; and young people's groups in schools and local authority areas.

**Figure 2: Case study participants**

LA	Local authority staff	young people's forum	School type	School staff and governors	Young people in schools (groups)
LA 1: Unitary Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Principal social worker for safeguarding and adviser to the LSCB</li> <li>Behaviour and attendance advisory officer</li> <li>Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board</li> </ul>	Yes	<b>School A</b> Co-educational academy, 11–16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Head teacher</li> <li>SENCO</li> <li>Inclusion Officer</li> <li>Pastoral Support Worker</li> <li>Safeguarding Governor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Council (including SEN representative)</li> </ul>
			<b>School B</b> Co-educational academy, 11–16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Head teacher</li> <li>SENCO</li> <li>Attendance Officer</li> <li>Pastoral Support Worker</li> <li>Parent governor and staff governor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Council</li> <li>Head Girl</li> <li>Year 8 student</li> </ul>
LA2: Northern County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safeguarding manager</li> </ul>	No	<b>School C</b> Co-educational selective grammar, 11–19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Head teacher</li> <li>SENCO</li> <li>Deputy Head in charge of pastoral support</li> <li>School Counsellor</li> <li>Parent governor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Council</li> <li>Two peer mentors (Sixth form students)</li> </ul>
LA3: London Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Head of Targeted and Specialist Children and Families Services</li> <li>Head of Targeted Services in Education and Learning</li> <li>Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board</li> </ul>	Yes	<b>School D</b> Co-educational faith school (academy), 4–18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Head teacher</li> <li>SENCO</li> <li>Pastoral Director</li> <li>Chair of governing body</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Council</li> <li>Group of Year 7 and Year 8 students</li> </ul>
			<b>School E</b> Girls comprehensive, 11–16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Head teacher</li> <li>Deputy head</li> <li>Safeguarding governor</li> <li>Head of Year 10</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Council</li> <li>Group of Year 10 students</li> </ul>
LA4: Southern County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safeguarding manager</li> </ul>	No	<b>School F</b> Co-educational academy, 11–16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Head teacher</li> <li>Assistant head teacher</li> <li>SENCO</li> <li>Child Protection Officer</li> <li>Safeguarding Governor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group of Year 7–8 students</li> <li>Group of Year 9–11 students</li> </ul>

## 2 Building on solid foundations

The process of identifying good practice case studies – drawing on publicly available documentation, including Ofsted inspections of schools and local authorities – meant that the case study schools were all known to be doing well in relation to their statutory responsibilities, for example, in relation to designated staff and safer recruitment policies. This statutory underpinning – described by the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) in LA3 as 'all the bread and butter stuff' was seen as absolutely crucial. She commented that:

*...all the policy stuff has to be in place – everything the school needs to have covered to get a good inspection report, including: the central single register; recruitment systems; systems for dealing with allegations; dedicated staff with responsibility for safeguarding.*

But good practice was consistently described as going 'over and above' the statutory minimum. Both scoping and stakeholder interviews indicated that the case study locations – at school and local authority level – were taking positive, creative and strategic approaches to safeguarding and child protection, within a broad framework (see chapter three) that encompassed pastoral care and attention to student wellbeing.

In times of economic recession and of change in school and local authority systems, to go 'over and above' minimum requirements is of course challenging. This chapter will focus on features of the case study locations that went beyond statutory minimum expectations, or which showed particular strengths in embedding statutory systems within schools or local authorities, in order to see how such developments had been achieved for in the case study areas. These were indicative of the benefits of embedding child protection practice within a wider conception of safeguarding.

### 2.1 Local authority cultures

#### 2.1.1 Safeguarding as a strategic priority

Across areas, professional stakeholders in schools and local authorities described the importance of a local authority culture that embedded a commitment to safeguarding and children's wellbeing as a central priority. This was something which had developed over time but, more than that, it was said to have required a strategic vision. For example:

*It makes a difference if you invest time and effort.*  
LA1, Adviser to Local Safeguarding Children's Board

*[This borough] also had a very early history of integrated working that was driven strategically by the Director of Children's Services at the time.*  
LA3, Chair of Local Safeguarding Children's Board

*The history of [the borough] is a really important facilitator – it's one of the strongest children's social care services we've ever had. [...] And we've had a strong focus on safeguarding in education. The [Director of Targeted and Specialist Child and Family Services] is a strong leader, and has maintained resources for social work in schools.*  
LA3, Director of Targeted Services in Education and Learning

Both LA1 and LA3 are relatively small local authorities – one unitary authority and one London borough, both with populations of fewer than 200,000 people. However, size was evidently not seen as the only factor which facilitated the development of a strong culture of safeguarding. The principal social worker interviewed in LA1 described his previous experience of successfully working within a large metropolitan authority to promote safeguarding as a high priority, highlighting the importance of the vision and commitment shown by elected members and senior management in social care and education, as well as by ‘champions leading from the bottom up’. He described a similar process in the unitary authority, where the culture had become strongly embedded over a number of years.

Similarly, in LA3, relevant expertise and common priorities amongst key senior staff were said to have driven – and to continue to drive – a strong strategic focus on safeguarding and child protection, which extended to education. In this context, it was interesting to note that the borough’s emphasis on bringing together safeguarding and education expertise could be seen in the professional backgrounds of some senior stakeholders, including the Head of Targeted Services in Education – who was qualified both as a teacher and a social worker – and the Independent Chair of the LSCB, who was a former HMI (Her Majesty’s Inspector of Schools). Arguably, this experience and knowledge base facilitated inter-agency understanding and the prioritisation of safeguarding within the borough.

The prioritisation of safeguarding within local authority culture was also said to have benefits in terms of social care staffing in both LA1 and LA3. In LA3, all three local authority stakeholders commented that the borough had low turnover of social workers. The retention of social work staff was seen as a key facilitator of interagency work with schools, offering a stability in inter-professional relationships that was said to facilitate joint working. In LA1, the local authority’s emphasis on safeguarding, within a wider context that supported youth participation and a broad understanding of wellbeing, was said to have helped recruitment, with new professionals attracted to the authority for its energy and vision.

Inevitably, the county councils were working with larger populations (both over 500,000) and a much greater geographical spread than the other case study authorities. Whilst only one school and one local authority stakeholder was included from each of these areas (see Appendix 1), interviewees indicated that these county councils had also been able to find a way of ensuring an integrated focus on safeguarding across the authority. Strategic leadership was seen as particularly important in these contexts, to enable the development of centralised services that spanned the county (see below).

### **2.1.2 Collaboration and sharing of good practice**

A striking theme to emerge across both schools and local authority case studies was a strong emphasis on collaboration, in relation to interagency working and sharing of good practice. A key theme across case studies was the development of a relationship-based learning culture within a local authority area, said to foster the sharing of good practice and early consultation about concerns. In LA3 for example, the Head of Targeted Services in Education spoke of the borough ‘developing a community of schools’ – a community which spanned different types of school, including academies and independent sector schools. In the same area, the Chair of the LSCB remarked that her role is ‘hugely around the old basic things – getting people to communicate, to talk and to listen’. These comments were echoed in LA1, where the principal social worker observed:

*You have to disseminate your successes so that others can see that it is worth doing this. Schools staff and young people see what others are doing and think, ‘I want a bit of that’ ... From one little seed things grow... Everything spirals.*



It was common for constituent members of the LSCB in the case study authorities to come together regularly to participate in forums where new information, good practice and challenges and struggles could be shared. The success of these forums was attributed to the interpersonal contact and communication they offered: trusting relationships were established and this facilitated on-going collaborative practice and frank dialogue.

### **Figure 3: Sharing experiences in a local authority forum, LA1**

- A non-competitive atmosphere is set at twice-termly LSCB network meetings where agencies and schools are genuinely desirous of sharing good practice with each other and wanting to learn from how others are managing the challenges they were all facing.
- Schools in the authority disseminate innovative ideas widely, for example DVDs they have made about their strategies for community and peer safety. Their work around bullying has led to yearly 'Diana Awards' for students as anti-bullying ambassadors (see <http://diana-award.org.uk/anti-bullying>)

## **2.2 Local authority systems**

One consequence of clear strategic priorities within local authorities was the development of roles and systems which spanned the whole authority. In LA2, a county council, and LA3, the London borough, frameworks had been designed to bring together education and safeguarding at local authority level.

The county council (LA2) ran a centralised Advisory Service. A small specialist team covers the whole county council area, offering a specialist advisory, training and quality assurance service to schools and education settings in relation to safeguarding matters. This team has a strategic overview of the safeguarding training needs of school staff across the whole authority. This enables it to target relevant training events and regular updates about news and events related to safeguarding, such as serious case review recommendations. The service additionally oversees the compliance of school policies and practices with Ofsted regulations.

In LA3, the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) had integrated a safeguarding function, and work was on-going to develop a dedicated Safeguarding and Education Team within the EWS. As part of this work, plans were on-going to develop a new system for accessing school safeguarding processes, with the creation of a new full-time post in safeguarding and education, who would audit school safeguarding systems (without charge) and offer schools safeguarding training.

Cross-authority and cross-school approaches were also seen as critically important, in using resources effectively, but also in creating common understandings of child protection and safeguarding. One manager, Director of Targeted Services, (Education and Learning) in LA3, emphasised the need to 'think about primary and secondary together', so as to ensure an integrated approach where social education about risk and need could be addressed from an early stage. It was also felt important to know individual schools, rather than thinking of schools as a 'type'. Similarly, he noted that child protection issues operate at a

family level, and so span primary and secondary. This holistic understanding had practical implications for local authority systems for working with schools. He observed:

*There are also scattered post-holders who work across the piece, such as domestic violence and anti-bullying coordinators. We had a joint primary and secondary anti-bullying conference in the borough, exploring issues of bullying. The primary ICT coordinator is also working across the borough [including with secondary schools] on e-safety. We're also doing a lot in primaries and secondaries within PSHE on sexual health and safeguarding.*

Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) were, unsurprisingly, a key focus for interagency working, acting as a hub for inter-professional liaison and development. The independent chair of the LSCB in LA1 spoke of a culture of a positive attitude of mind, strong commitment to partnership working and co-operative relational style that was pervasive across the unitary authority, including among the elected members and headteachers. There was also a strong participatory ethos in the LSCB, with young people involved at every level. In LA3, the chair of the LSCB similarly emphasised partnership working, highlighting its importance at a time of change and financial constraint. She noted that when it first became clear that the local authority would face funding cuts:

*...we jettisoned aspects of our forward plans for LSCB meetings. We had a series of meetings – each agency presented what was happening in their neck of the woods. [That work ensured that] we were not surprised – we could pre-empt and plan for change.*

The study revealed variable use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) across the case study areas, both in terms of the extent of its use and in who would lead the assessment. There is some well-documented resistance to using the CAF nationally as universal services sometimes feel they are being asked to do work which 'belongs to' children's social care (Baginsky, 2007). The London borough in this study continued to use both the CAF and the Lead Professional framework, and was aiming to extend their use – for example, to require a CAF for managed moves or school exclusion, to provide a more holistic assessment of children's needs. At the same time, the Head of Targeted and Specialist Child and Family Services was implementing a range of mechanisms to promote increased use of the CAF, including: additional training; establishing a cross-school Lead Professional Group (to give support with taking this role, which school staff find difficult); having 'CAF Champions' to promote use of the CAF in each area; and bringing in another local authority to present on their successful embedded approach to using the CAF.

### **2.3 Collaboration between schools and other agencies**

Over the past decade a plethora of research studies (e.g. Frost, 2005; Davies and Ward, 2012), Serious Case Reviews (Brandon et al, 2008; Ofsted 2011b), inquiry reports (e.g. Laming, 2003), practice guidance (e.g. DCSF, 2010) and two reviews of the state of child protection in England (Laming, 2009; Munro, 2011) have highlighted the importance of information sharing and communication between agencies. So it is unsurprising that professional stakeholders in schools and local authorities across areas consistently highlighted these concerns, commenting that good inter-professional collaboration and communication is vital if the most vulnerable students are to be properly protected and supported. This was summed up by the chair of a Local Safeguarding Children's Board:

*But over and above that, you need the communication network – so when you pick up that something's not right, you are able to talk to the right individual. That*

*depends on how much individual pastoral capacity you have, and on having a network of contacts in order to pursue that concern.*

By contrast, another senior local authority stakeholder cautioned that schools who were not open to communication and collaboration could jeopardise good practice in child protection. They observed:

*It relates to leadership in schools, and their priorities. For example, in one school [in this local authority] that has had a change of head, the previous head was quite insular. If an incident occurred, the head would try and close it down, to deal with it without seeing the outside needs. The school had a protectionist institutional view.*

It was generally recognised (across stakeholder groups and case study areas) that school staff may feel ill-equipped to assess child protection concerns, and so known contacts (as well as in-school expertise) were seen as crucial in supporting difficult decisions about referral to social services. As such, one senior manager commented that referrals were often incident-led, made at a crisis point. However, where local services are accessible and the referral processes made user friendly, this helped school staff feel confident about talking through concerns with professionals who have specific expertise in safeguarding. The Head of Targeted Services in Education and Learning (LA3) saw this integrated approach as crucial in identifying need:

*The majority of cases are coming through joined up local authority services, working with individual professionals.*

Most head teachers wanted opportunities for both formal and informal consultation. Their expertise is not in child protection but in education and broader aspects of child welfare, so they needed external guidance, reassurance and support in dealing with vulnerable children. In LA3, the Director of Targeted and Specialist Children and Family Services ensures that each school has a link senior manager who visit at least annually, the SENCO or Head has the mobile phone number for their link manager so that problems can be resolved or tackled early. She observed that:

*Most heads wanted opportunities for consultation – they are conscious that they are not experts in child protection, and want reassurance and support in dealing with vulnerable children.*

In terms of links and consultation beyond the school, key figures varied to some extent depending on the local authority area and school needs, although there were some commonalities. In LA2 (county council), each school was linked to a 'professional adviser', with whom they could consult about child protection matters. Close liaison between schools and professional advisers was said to build trust, thus facilitating early consultation about matters provoking concern where thresholds are unclear. LA3 (London borough) operated a 'Team Around the School' approach, including termly meetings within schools to discuss potentially vulnerable young people, and involving representatives from CAMHS, the Educational Welfare Service (EWO), and Educational Psychology. All schools in the borough also have a direct link with the senior management team in Targeted and Specialist Children and Family Services – including team members' mobile phone numbers – and, as noted above, the team visit schools at least annually to explore 'how we can support them, or unblock any issues'.

In LA1 (unitary authority) the small size of the authority appeared to enable strong working relationships between school and social care staff. For example:

Office of the Children's Commissioner: Good Practice in Safeguarding and Child Protection in Secondary Schools

*We now phone through to children's services and we do not have a named social worker but this is a small county and we can follow up with each other when we know each other from other work.*

(School SENCO, LA1)

*[I have] an excellent relationship with children's services. Eighteen months ago the services were broken up into locality teams and this has made it so much easier. In a locality, team members pop into school now, and so we are good at liaising with the social workers.*

(School Inclusion Officer, LA1)

School nurses worked closely with the SENCO in all schools, with the exception of the school in LA4 which was said to be currently without an allocated school nurse. This role was seen as important in relation to child protection and safeguarding. This finding is not surprising, given evidence from Chase and colleagues' (2010) study of school nursing. These authors found that – particularly in areas of high socio-economic deprivation – school nurses could spend the majority of their time dealing with safeguarding issues, often holding substantial responsibility when the concerns did not meet thresholds for referral to children's social care. These concerns were summed up by a Community Nurse Manager interviewed for that study (Chase et al, 2010, p35):

*And because of the way we have moved from Section 17, in order to have a social worker you need to be really well into the Section 47 – the real safeguarding, child abuse concerns. But we have lots of what I call 'high child in needs', you know, where there are lots of issues about neglect, drug and alcohol misuse, domestic violence, who might have had a social worker years ago but haven't anymore. So school nurses are much more involved with those children and families.*

Both schools in LA3 (the London borough) had linked community police officers working from the school site, and these roles were also seen as significant in terms of child protection. In part, this was seen as relating to a wider understanding of safeguarding for children – for example, in relation to risks associated with gang activity in the London borough, but there was evidence that school police officers could also be involved in supporting schools with child protection concerns. In one London school, concern about pupils who had stopped attending had been discussed with the school's linked police officer, who then took steps to track the young people's whereabouts.

As these examples show, it is important to recognise that children's social care is not the only agency that schools need to work with in relation to safeguarding or child protection. In LA3, the chair of the LSCB commented that social care was 'one bit of the focus, but not the entirety'. She highlighted the key role of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Youth Offending Services, sexual health and substance misuse services, alongside the work of a range of local authority and voluntary agencies in the borough who work with schools and young people in relation to safeguarding and child protection.

Joint work with schools was not only concerned with identifying child protection cases, but also with developing awareness and supporting good practice. In LA3, key roles had been funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant to lead work on domestic violence and bullying. The Head of Targeted and Specialist Child and Family Services explained:

*They support teachers in preparing lessons – for example, in PSHE – and will also run some lessons. It's about providing the support and the tools to go with the work*

– teachers needs support and help to find the words.

Local authority culture – and funding – was seen as key in maintaining joint working arrangements. Thus, it was said by one senior manager that,

*CAMHS in [the borough] have always thought that it is better to be in the school – that's all part of building the Team Around the School.*

Another senior manager was praised by a colleague for her skill in protecting resources to support safeguarding in schools. The level of services in schools depended on combining core local authority funding with additional buy-in from schools, which enabled schools to invest according to perceived benefits and needs. For example, a senior manager in LA3 explained that schools had a core allocation of Educational Psychologist and Educational Welfare Officer time, but that some schools chose to buy in more input from these services.

Nonetheless, financial pressures on schools and local authorities – and changes in budgetary arrangements – were generally seen to pose challenges to maintaining and developing good practice in relation to child protection in secondary schools. To some extent, the historic priority given to joint working and safeguarding in the case study authorities was seen to have protected against budget cuts. However, it was acknowledged that services were often 'diluted' or had 'dwindled'. One senior local authority manager observed that reductions in core funding meant that schools were expected to pay for additional support that had previously been resourced through the local authority, and some 'schools didn't want to pay'. Whilst it may be, (s)he said, that, 'schools will always think there are not enough resources', there are evidently critical challenges for schools and local authorities the face of significant economic cuts.

## **2.4 Training and professional roles within schools**

Case study authorities and schools stated strong commitment to developing the knowledge and skills of staff in relation to safeguarding and child protection matters. Local authorities aspired to provide training and professional development opportunities for all staff that went substantially beyond the minimum three-year frequency set out by DCSF (2010) in *Working Together To Safeguard Children* (the updated Working Together guidance (DfE 2013) does not specify frequency of training).

A key feature of professional development in this field was the combination of formal training with advisory work and communication systems described earlier, such that training was key, but not the only route to developing good practice. For example, LA1 spoke of seeking to ensure that school staff received yearly training, but this was supplemented by regular liaison meetings across the authority to discuss challenges and dilemmas.

Another key feature of training in the case study authorities was an emphasis on training all levels of staff. In LA2 (county council), the importance of training school bus drivers and escorts about child wellbeing and safety was recognised, as many young people travelled long journeys each day. It was said that training and support meant drivers and escorts would be better able to create an atmosphere on the journey which feels supportive to young people and where bullying cannot flourish. Whilst the journey was one small part of the school day, it was seen as part of a mosaic of good practice that helps students feel safe more generally within their school experience.

Moreover, workers who see children regularly – such as bus drivers or lunchtime staff – can build up important relationships with young people, and so might become the person a

student would trust the most to disclose child protection concerns. Similarly, in LA3, a manager commented that 'it's often people like learning mentors who pick things up', and so it is important that training is not restricted to staff in key designated roles. It was emphasised that all staff within the school need to be prepared to respond appropriately to disclosures, knowing when and how to refer on, and to support young people in disclosure:

*Every member of staff knows on this school if they are worried about something, they pass it on. If there's any concern, you let someone know. And we will do something with it. And you never, ever ignore anything.*  
(Deputy Headteacher, LA3)

In line with statutory requirements (DCSF, 2010), all the case study schools had a designated lead for safeguarding, usually the SENCO or deputy head. All the case study schools also had identified staff with particular responsibilities for pastoral care and support, in addition to the designated lead for safeguarding. These roles were filled in different ways in the six different schools, sometimes by teachers in form tutor roles, but often by other staff such as pastoral care leads, counsellors or learning mentors.

In LA4, the school had established 'child protection guidance leaders' for each year group, from non-teaching staff (such as former Teaching Assistants), as part of a wider initiative to develop support for potentially marginalised or vulnerable students. Whilst much of their work was said to be dealing with difficulties such as 'peer fall outs', it was noted that the guidance leaders' knowledge of and relationships with students also meant that 'on the whole we pick up child protection fairly well'.

The importance for students of feeling able to talk to pastoral staff about their worries was also emphasised by young people. For example:

*When there's like a child in the school who has like only one parent or something like that, I think that they I think most of them go to the chapel to speak to, to speak to [staff member] because she's always there for like problems and stuff.*  
(Year 8 student in a faith school)

Within any school, it is the role of the designated safeguarding lead to identify and respond to ongoing training and development needs regarding child protection. In one of the unitary authority academies, the SENCO and the head jointly ran yearly child protection training for all staff, with enhanced training for new staff members. The head discussed relevant legislation and the SENCO introduced staff to case study examples which raised child protection concerns such as sexual and physical abuse. In this school the SENCO described her role as follows:

*[I am] a child protection coordinator, and I see safeguarding as everyone's responsibility, and in that sense I class myself as the person who is overseeing the safeguarding role.*

In this local authority, training materials had been provided by the LSCB, to ensure consistency across the authority as to the key messages and procedures covered. Similarly, in LA3 (London borough), the Safeguarding and Education Team (within the Educational Welfare Service) had designed cross-borough training in safeguarding and child protection for schools. This addressed a range of areas, including designing and managing monitoring systems, safer recruitment, and developing involvement of the designated governor, 'empowering them to challenge heads'. Like LA1, in order to develop consistent approaches across schools (and from primary to secondary), this training was based on standardised

materials:

*When we are running training sessions for schools, we would use the same Powerpoint – we might highlight different issues.*

(Head of Targeted Support, Education and Learning, LA3)

One important focus for training in schools was to support staff in recognising safeguarding and child protection needs – including when students' presentation and behaviour (such as poor conduct and low school attendance) – might indicate their exposure to risky or harmful events or environments, in school or outside. In LA3, for example, Targeted and Specialist Child and Family Services had developed training for schools in safeguarding and the CAF, and the manager interviewed reported good uptake by schools. In LA1, it was said that when students were showing signs of beginning to disengage from school this was usually seen as a matter for concern in terms of child wellbeing. A school SENCO remarked:

*We don't (always) know what happens at home and each student's behaviour, no matter how bad it is, has reasons and we need to understand that.*

This SENCO took a central role in the school to promoting a student-centred, empathetic attitude towards young people's life experiences and behaviour, aiming to embed a culture within which staff should look beyond a problem focus to seek to identify and address the underlying reasons for students' conduct.

Similarly, the head of the single sex school in LA3 emphasised the need for staff to recognise that female students may 'tend to internalise problems and present with anorexia or through self-harming'. Copycat patterns of self-harm were highlighted as a safeguarding concern in LA4, where school staff described a previous incident in which students had linked on a Facebook group to self-harm collectively at a designated time. It was noted that this issue had been addressed, in part, by support for students through school-based child protection guidance officers (pastoral care staff).

Students also recognised the need for staff to avoid problematising young people who may be in difficulty. This concern was summed up eloquently by a Year 11 boy in LA1, who commented that schools create difficulties for students when teachers refer to students as 'problems'. He pointed out that none of us know why a person is a 'problem' and we need to look beyond the term.

DCSF guidance from *Working Together To Safeguard Children* (2010 – subsequently updated as DfE 2013) was also used in staff training sessions in LA1, with a focus on supporting them in listening to young people and taking what they say seriously without disrupting criminal prosecution in cases of serious abuse:

*I also tell the staff that they should thank the child for talking to them, that they should always believe the child and that they should not ask too many questions because this will protect any statement that a child might later make. So I tell them to not ask too many questions and pass on the information to myself. I use real case study examples too so that staff understand how serious this is.*

(SENCO, LA1)

Another key theme in relation to training and professional development was the need for persistence, closely linked to our earlier observations about creating and maintaining a culture that emphasises safeguarding. Several professional stakeholders talked about

continuous reinforcement, to support schools in prioritising child protection. Senior local authority figures spoke of the need for 'a systematic drip drip' to maintain levels of awareness among school staff, and one described her role as 'doggedly looking at what's happening'. Such doggedness was not seen as necessary because schools were unaware or unconcerned with young people's child protection needs, but rather reflected recognition of the extent of pressures that schools are under, and the competing priorities faced by schools and child protection services. One local authority stakeholder, with a background in education, highlighted what she saw as an 'inherent tension' in schools' work with child protection needs:

*Schools are there primarily to teach children, and they are judged and browbeaten on that basis. Social workers are there to make sure children are okay, and they are judged and browbeaten on that basis.*

Despite these concerns, such divisions were not strongly apparent in the case study schools. Whilst bearing in mind that our research was focused on examples of recognised good practice, the research does indicate that the 'inherent tension' between schools and child protection services can be overcome through staff training and a broad understanding of safeguarding needs at school and local authority level.



## 3 Holistic approaches to safety and wellbeing

### 3.1 Understandings of ‘child protection’ and ‘safeguarding’

Writing about inter-professional working, Frost (2005) commented on the diversity of understandings of child abuse, and the challenges that this posed to partnership across agencies. Similarly, in the present study, participants varied in their emphasis on, and interpretation of, ‘child protection’ and ‘safeguarding’ in the school context.

School staff with specific responsibilities for safeguarding, such as SENCOs in designated roles, were most likely to use the term ‘child protection’ and to refer specifically to abuse and neglect within the family context. Head teachers, by contrast, tended to talk more about safeguarding responsibilities, encompassing a broader range of issues related to safety and emotional wellbeing within the school, home and wider community. This included issues such as bullying, cyber-safety, child sexual exploitation, drug and alcohol misuse, and peer relationship-abuse as well as child abuse or neglect.

Understandings and priorities in relation to child protection were responsive to locally defined needs within the school itself, and the local community. In the London borough, as noted above, concerns about Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), domestic violence, and enforced marriage were discussed by several stakeholders as safeguarding priorities. The local authority had used Dedicated Schools Grant funds to support PSHE teaching in areas including domestic violence. In addition, within the single sex school in this borough, the headteacher and staff had incorporated discussion of these issues across the school curriculum, and several students on the School Council raised these issues in explaining their understandings of child protection.

By contrast, in the selective grammar school, no children were currently the subject of a Child Protection Plan. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given that context, the headteacher described the school’s key safeguarding priority as focused on emotional wellbeing and resilience for students who could be subject to high levels of pressure (or perceived pressure) to achieve academic success, from school and/or home. He commented that such pressures were particularly intense as the school was in an area of moderately high economic and social disadvantage, and some students were the first in the family to do well at school – the hopes of the whole family were riding on them and sometimes this pressure could cause significant stress.

This broad focus on safeguarding, as in the example above, raises an important conceptual question for the present study. Does a broad understanding help to support child protection in schools, within a framework of emphasising wellbeing and the whole child? Or does it incur the risk that specific child protection issues could get lost, when a wider discourse about safety and wellbeing is put centre stage? Across local authorities, and across stakeholder groups, the former interpretation was emphasised. Child protection was seen as necessarily embedded within integrated child-centred approaches to support for wellbeing, learning and development.

A broader understanding of safeguarding was seen to help staff to recognise child protection needs. This issue is particularly important given the evidence discussed in chapter one that the most vulnerable young people can appear to be ‘hard to help’ (Brandon et al, 2008): child protection needs may be masked by challenging behaviour or poor attendance.

Such concerns were echoed by interviewees across local authorities in our study. One local authority manager commented that ‘a key challenge is that the most vulnerable pupils are often the ones that no one wants to teach’. These comments were echoed by another senior interviewee who gave the following advice:

*Many teachers acknowledge children’s wider needs, but don’t feel equipped to deal with them. And it is also lack of time. I think it would be very good [for your report] to be upfront with that. Especially now school budgets are going to shrink and schools are under greater time pressure. It’s not easy for them to know how much to be dealing with these things. If you are a teacher, and you are trying to get 26 children through a test, while one is being very disruptive because something awful is happening ... All of that.*

Respondents across local authorities saw a broader perspective as particularly important for secondary school-aged young people, because of the need to recognise and respond to the potential meanings behind young people’s worrying behaviours, and so to refer specific child protection concerns appropriately to other agencies. The Head of Targeted Services in Education and Learning in LA3 commented:

*For example, you have cases where children are disappearing off the roll, becoming home educated – and that can be a matter for concern. Having the EWS and safeguarding functions linked means you have additional scope to pick up that kind of concern.*

The need to recognise connections between poor attendance and wider safeguarding or wellbeing needs was further highlighted by a Year 11 student in one of the case study schools. He explained:

*Sometimes with some students it can be an attendance issue, if they feel that because of problems going on at home or certain things happening in their life, they feel that oh, school’s maybe the last priority right now.*

This observation was echoed by the Inclusion Officer at a school in LA1. She observed:

*I was called an attendance officer but I did not like the term so I changed it. [...] Low attendance usually has a good and genuine reason.*

Young people interviewed also highlighted the need for teachers to look beyond presenting problems to address underlying difficulties. In one school, students raised these concerns in relation to behaviour management in the school, discussing a new ‘exclusion room’ and saying that ‘way too many kids are sent in there.’ The head girl and head boy in this school were trying to address these concerns by conducting a student survey to institute a reward system for good behaviour. This is a good example of how ‘bottom-up’ participatory practices in schools (which are covered in more depth in chapter four) go to the heart of the issue for students’ safeguarding needs. In another school, a Year 11 student gave the following advice:

*If people [are] going to call them problem children, they should find out what’s caused them to act out and stand out, rather than try and be the best they can be, because if you’re just calling them a problem child essentially you’re just putting them down as well so you’re not, you’re not giving them the chance to thrive. You’re putting them down.*

Another student in the same school explained:

*Obviously, if you've got issues or certain qualities that are going on at home then obviously you're more than likely going to bring them into the school environment as it can affect your learning in class or just your general behaviour around school.*

The deputy head in a school in LA3 echoed that advice:

*When something difficult happens in someone's life, how they present at school will change [...] well who's showing behaviour problems or problems of conflict with somebody else – and that's when we can start going 'now, what are we going to do about it?'*

### **3.2 Safeguarding and Child protection in the curriculum: Developing awareness**

One important message to emerge from the research was the need to ensure that all young people themselves are supported and prepared to recognise, and protect themselves from, potential risks. This was not seen as diminishing the central importance of adult roles and responsibilities in relation to child protection concerns, but rather aims to acknowledge the particular risks that young people may encounter as they grow up – for example, drug and alcohol use, relationship and peer-on-peer abuse, sexual exploitation, and e-safety – and to enable their agency in managing such risks.

As discussed in chapter four, participatory cultures and approaches such as peer mentoring were seen as important for schools in developing a philosophy that prioritises child safety and wellbeing. However, a related question to emerge from the study concerns the extent to which safeguarding is addressed within the school curriculum, enabling students to gain an understanding of child abuse and protection that helps protect themselves and others from risk of harm.

Most schools in the study described an emphasis on broad aspects of welfare, wellbeing and safety, for example when addressing in PSHE lessons how students might keep themselves safe and defining what constitutes risky or appropriate behaviours. In only one school (the single sex comprehensive in LA3) had serious child protection issues such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation and domestic abuse been incorporated explicitly into the curriculum, and this had been implemented by the head because of particular concern about these risks within the communities served by the school. As noted above, this London local authority had used Dedicated Schools Grant funds to support PSHE teaching around such topics.

The deputy head in the school explained:

*So what we do is all of these aspects about being safe and being in control of your life are taught explicitly in lessons, in a very supportive way.*

Also in LA3, students spoke about 'PAL' lessons – Preparation for Adult Life – as providing a space to reflect, as well as helping to raise awareness of wider safeguarding and related concerns:

*It's like a lesson and we all go to like PAL where, it's about preparing for adult life and stuff like that and they talk about families and stuff like that and that people in care and knife crime and stuff like that.*  
(Year 8 student)

*We have discussion lessons where we can just sit and talk about our opinions on things and it can be like personal problems. And it's like a good lesson to feel that I would like, in my PAL lessons I would feel that I can like talk openly about problems that I have, because it's like an environment where you can trust the people in your classroom, because like my PAL class is quite small as well, so it's good.*  
(Year 9 student)

In LA2, the LSCB had commissioned a drama production around child sexual exploitation to aid students' awareness of the risks involved, including information about 'grooming', cyber-safety, and healthy relationships. The production was seen by almost 5000 young people across the county, mostly Year 8 and Year 9 students, and was supported by discussion groups.

Similarly, in LA3, the local authority had funded a voluntary organisation drama group to perform plays in schools to raise awareness in relation to domestic violence; feedback was that schools had found this very useful. These examples indicate the potential to tackle sensitive child protection issues within schools, whilst recognising the need for local determination to ensure the relevance of the issues discussed for student communities.

### **3.3 Connecting primary and secondary school?**

The different challenges for primary and secondary schools in identifying child protection needs were highlighted by several professional stakeholders. In LA3, the Head of Targeted and Specialist Child and Family Services summed up her concerns as follows:

*It is also difficult for teachers to pick up signals if they are working in large classes. Underlying issues – for example, being a young carer, having a parent in prison, domestic violence – are often hidden. [...] Primary schools can pick up child protection needs more easily because they see parents – if they're late, if you can smell alcohol on the breath. It's not so easy to spot in secondaries because teachers have very little direct contact with parents.*

There was some variation amongst interviewees as to the extent to which primary and secondary schools were seen as facing different issues in relation to child safeguarding and protection. Some respondents emphasised commonalities between primary and secondary, and highlighted vertical approaches to training and support in order to address these concerns. Examples included visits from secondary school peer mentors to local primary schools and training and activities that spanned primary and secondary schools, for example in relation to anti-bullying and e-safety. The Head of Targeted Services for Education and Learning in LA3 commented that child protection work 'is no different in primary and secondary. [...] secondary schools may be more complex, but not necessarily'.

Nonetheless, one theme to emerge from interviews with professional stakeholders in schools was of an increased emphasis, from primary to secondary, on actively engaging their students in promoting their own safety and wellbeing across all the domains of their life experience. This emphasis was framed within a broad understanding of safeguarding, to allow young people to develop strategies for life, in keeping themselves and others safe and emotionally healthy. Such priorities are of course not exclusive to secondary schools, and

indeed the manager quoted above (Head of Targeted Services for Education and Learning in LA3) highlighted Year 6 as a key point at which to raise awareness among young people of potential safeguarding risks:

*E-safety, for example, it's probably the biggest issue that young people face. Most of our work on that in the borough is at the top of junior school. Year 6 is when children get mobiles, and it is also when they start to get into more arguments – there are more issues with anger and bullying. [...] Sexual exploitation and Female Genital Mutilation are also issues where you need to build awareness in primary.*

As the example above indicates, work to support safeguarding and child protection in secondary school was also concerned with transitions from primary to secondary. In one academy in LA1, each incoming pupil is allocated an older student as a 'buddy' mentor, who visits the primary school to provide early reassurance that their welfare is central. In the same school, the SENCO invites Year 6 children with identified special needs to come and take photos of the secondary school which they can look at during the summer holiday in order to become familiar with the school environment.

Students also gave examples of link visits and mentoring for students moving into secondary, and one student group highlighted this support as a key message for good practice:

*Other secondary schools around the country should have their students go into the local primary schools in their area to let primary age children know about what their school does. [...] Schools should make a storyline based film to pass out to the primary age children to talk about how the school will help them settle, about peer mentors and worries such as bullying and cyber-bullying.*

### **3.4 Promoting student wellbeing**

As discussed earlier, professional stakeholders acknowledged the pressures on schools associated with performance related league tables. However, the schools in our study explicitly recognised the potential tension between safeguarding and performance agendas, and had sought to address it. Headteachers were widely recognised as key in promoting school cultures that prioritised support and wellbeing as well as academic achievement. This facet of work in the case study schools goes beyond concern to identify child protection needs, to address support for students who may be experiencing difficult situations – at home or elsewhere – and for whom school may play a critical role in providing stability and support. That function applied not only to work with children in situations that did not meet thresholds for child protection referral, but was also situated more broadly within a wider school ethos that promoted student wellbeing. The quotes below indicate an awareness of the breadth of safeguarding thinking within which the child protection response can be situated – resulting sometimes in an interchangeable use of these words. For example, the headteacher of one school in LA1 observed:

*Quite a few issues have come up, with children in this school ... they often don't appear on that Child Protection register but they have quite severe difficulties at home that obviously then comes into school. And school can be the only safe environment for them very often.*

He went on to explain:

*You've got, on the one hand, safeguarding at what I would call the extreme end. [...] And I think everybody recognises what it is at that end of the spectrum. I think there's a whole gamut of safeguarding that happens below that, and that's the bit that's difficult to define, which is why I say that it's about making sure that every single child has, an upbringing, a time in school where they can feel safe where they've got somewhere safe to go.*

In an academy in LA3, form tutor groups were organised as 'family groups', with the tutor as their 'guardian'. A Year 10 student explained:

*The guardian of the family group is a teacher – like any teacher can be a guardian and you'll get to know them quite well.*

A Year 8 student at this school explained why she thought it so valuable to bring a family ethos into the school:

*Because people outside of school they probably don't have a very good family, or families that argue, so they don't know how to experience like a good home environment. So that's why children in that kind of situation enjoy going to our school because they get to experience families and they have people that look out for them and love them that they might not have outside of school.*

In another area, the school's pastoral leader echoed this wider protective and supportive role for the school:

*We can't make up for families that are not parenting in ways that we would hope that our children would be parented, but we can try and put in place as many opportunities that enable students to build their confidence.*

Staff in the selective grammar school and the London borough academy, both of which were highly ranked in exam league tables, spoke most strongly about the importance of ensuring young people's emotional wellbeing was not side-lined by the push to raise grade averages. One example of this approach was that attendance problems were said to be dealt with in a supportive and creative, rather than punitive, way. In both schools it was recognised that poor attendance may be an indicator that a young person is at risk in some way, or that the student is feeling 'out of place'. Both schools gave examples of academically able boys who had started skipping school. In both cases they had been offered individual support, and the SENCOs had learnt that the boys felt the environment did not fit with their self-identity or future aspirations. A punitive approach, driven by concern about league tables, would, it was said, have added to these boys' problems and disengagement from school. In both cases, the SENCOs had linked the boys to apprenticeship experiences on condition that the boys still went to some lessons; as a consequence, both boys had continued to stay engaged in their school.

While these examples do not relate to child protection, they highlight a broader concern with students' wellbeing and future life chances – whilst illustrating an individualised and non-punitive approach that would be equally relevant for the identification of safeguarding needs.

The connection between safeguarding and wellbeing was further emphasised by a head teacher from an academy in LA1, who explained that raising the aspirations of students could promote better outcomes for young people who have had adverse experiences. He

criticised the tendency for professionals to view young people in disadvantaged circumstances – including those with protection needs – as primarily vulnerable or problematic, rather than as also having capability and potential. His central aim, by contrast, was to raise the aspirations of his pupils and the expectations of his teaching staff. He did this by setting up a full and varied ‘enrichment’ programme, providing students with the opportunity to undertake a range of trips to other parts of the country and to France. Students who do not have the funds to afford such trips are sponsored by the school.

Is such work relevant to child protection? This head teacher’s contention was that by widening young people’s experiences he furthered their life chances as they gained confidence in new situations and gave them new points of reference for dictating the direction that their lives might take:

*When I came to the school I challenged teachers’ low aspirations for our students. The pupils who come here already tend to have low aspirations. I believe that it is our job to broaden their outlook on the world and to introduce them to new experiences. We need to give them alternative perspectives so that they have a broader range of experiences by which to contextualise their own lives.*

Concern about the ‘normalisation’ of low expectations in relation to achievement and wellbeing was also framed as a broad safeguarding concern. One head teacher commented:

*We cannot begin to address safeguarding concerns if the experiences we are concerned about have been made normal within a student’s wider community.*

This resonates with findings from a recent study of targeted family support (Boddy et al, 2012), which highlighted the links between safeguarding concerns for children and young people and the normalisation of harmful practices within local communities (for example, in relation to alcohol and substance misuse). In this context, schools’ emphasis on raising awareness and aspirations can clearly be understood within a frame of child protection, on the basis that young people who value themselves will be better able to protect themselves from risk of harm, now or in the future. This perspective was summed up by the headteacher of the girls’ comprehensive in LA3:

*If we create an environment in which a girl can create her own identity then she is in a strong place. [...] [We] show them through the visitors to school, the talks in assembly [and so on] that they can be in charge of their own destiny and that qualifications will enhance their life opportunities.*

This head teacher had uncompromising expectations that the students follow rules and regulations regarding behaviour, but she explained that these expectations were not enforced punitively through sanctions, but rather through discussion about reasons and consequences:

*We support girls but do not let their difficulties create an excuse for not challenging themselves ... We talk to the girls and explain why something has to happen.*

An emphasis on high expectations could also be interpreted as a source of pressure for students, undermining rather than enhancing emotional wellbeing. Three of the head teachers in our study spoke about concerns this raised for them. The selective grammar in LA2 described its aspirations on the school website as challenging its students, providing ‘education of the highest level for the top quarter of the ability range’. However, the

headteacher in this school spoke in some detail about his work since joining the school, to address what he saw as a very competitive school environment, where students had not seemed happy. He described work with the deputy head to develop a culture in the school where welfare of the whole child was considered a priority, rather than just their academic achievement. As part of this work, the school now had a school counsellor. He explained his rationale:

*Every child is an individual person. We should not categorise them. Children should come in as children and leave as young adults and for some this is a smooth process and for others it's difficult and we pick up the pieces. [...] qualifications get these children through the door, but we focus on softer skills. Resilience and emotional intelligence will get them the jobs in later life. [...] If you want high academic results which we do, then students' emotional wellbeing needs to be supported.*

This connection between emotional wellbeing and academic success was echoed by one of the young people interviewed in the study, who remarked:

*Me and my friends are in the top set and we had a falling out. [Member of school staff] was told that things were not right between us, so she got us together and gave us time to talk and sort things out. It was important that we were happy and if we were happy we would still do well with our work.*

Extra-curricular activities were also highlighted by a range of school stakeholders as enabling a wider culture of wellbeing and safety for children within the school. It was noted that vulnerable students might find it difficult to negotiate large social groups, free time and the open environment of the playground, and that anxieties in this regard could cut them off from the kinds of social supports which might help them to feel safe and confide issues of concern. Staff provided a range of extra-curricular clubs and activities to support social cohesion and develop a sense of community safety and inclusivity within the school. For example, in one school it was reported:

*We used to have an 'anti-bullying club' now we have a 'more to life club' which offers students alternative perspectives on their life experiences.*

Another school had a peer-to-peer mentoring room that young people could go to during break times. Two other schools used the school library to provide a safe space that was open to all. A Year 11 student and peer mentor in LA2 explained how her school's lunchtime club functioned as a safe space, in which students could relax, but also feel confident to speak to mentors about any concerns:

*We have a lunchtime club which peer mentors run every single dinner, and there they can just, there's games there's films there's things like that and the peer mentors will always be about just for you to talk, like talk to if you need to? There was a room, which – if somebody came to you with a problem - you would take the pupil there, and talk to them. So it was like private so they could just like let it all out. And we all had the yellow badges that were like showed who we were, with 'Peer mentor' written on them.*

Students in other schools also spoke of the importance of safe spaces in school where they felt they could speak freely about any worries, and relax:



*And I just think it's so nice, just to be able to relax, and you know that if you do ever get into trouble or you've got something you really want to just get off your chest, you can just go to either the Base or the staff or anywhere really. It's nice.*  
(Year 9 student)

*You can do things you didn't think you could be able to do at secondary school, because, like, they don't really do things like painting any more. You only do that stuff in, like, nursery and stuff. So they still let you have a piece of, like, your childhood so you're not too stressed, so that children can actually relax.*  
(Year 8 student)

After school clubs and enrichment activities were seen as especially valuable for students who were potentially vulnerable or from disadvantaged backgrounds, as the following comment from a Year 11 girl indicates:

*There is no one in my family who is good, they are all bad. I go to young cadets after school and found out about the cadets when they visited in a school assembly.*

### **3.5 Working with families**

Work with families was also highlighted in LA3 and LA4 as being a core component of good practice for schools in safeguarding and child protection. This included systems at local authority and school level. The Head of Targeted Services for Schools and Learning in LA3 described a 'triangle' of work involving child protection in both primary and secondary schools. He explained:

*The focus on intervention with troubled families is also relevant to this work. The LA is looking at government policy and funding streams, and at the model that we know is working. It's about a triangle of interventions – the EWS, maybe the Youth Offending Service, and the multi-agency Family First approach. Very intensive work is at the top of the triangle with social work involvement. So, Team Around the School converts to Team Around the Child or Team Around the Family.*

The Director of Targeted and Specialist Children and Family Services also highlighted a family-focused approach, including linking family support workers to schools:

*We have protected funding to early intervention services and as a result allocate family support workers to link with schools through our new Family First Teams. Every school has a link to the Early Intervention service (Families First) which we think better meets their needs than the statutory service. In many schools the FF service run coffee mornings, parenting groups, take referrals and generally work to build community cohesion and dispel the myths about statutory interventions.*

In this context, it is interesting to note that the school visited in LA4 was developing plans to fund a school-based parent link worker. These plans arose from work by the head and the deputy, who was the designated lead for safeguarding, systematically gathering evidence about the needs of young people in the school, and concluding from this work that parents needed to be an additional focus for school work in relation to safeguarding. The key role of the school-based parent link worker would be to visit parents in their homes to help identify and respond appropriately to potential child safeguarding needs, and to strengthen links between the school and individual families.

As noted earlier, secondary schools have less direct day-to-day contact with students' families than primary schools, and this can pose challenges for the identification of safeguarding needs – such that schools are more reliant on student disclosure of concerns or on recognising signs that a young person may be in need. This relative distance from parents can also pose challenges for schools in communication with and involvement of families – and this may account for the fact that work with families was relatively little discussed in schools in the present study. Recognising the importance of communication with parents, one London school had employed bilingual support officers to support students and link between home and school. From a child protection perspective this role was seen as key, where parents do not speak English as a first language, because seamless communication about a student's needs was more likely to be established.

It is also important to distinguish between different aspects of schools' work with families in relation to child protection. Schools may have a role in support and involvement when concerns are below thresholds for referral to child protection services, although this was not emphasised in the present study. Especially challenging, however, are times when schools need to refer a child protection issue for investigation to local authority social care teams. A senior lead in one local authority child and family service commented:

*Most heads want opportunities for consultation – they are conscious that they are not experts in child protection, and want reassurance and support in dealing with vulnerable children.*

However, this interviewee also remarked that some schools were resistant to activities such as the CAF, which entail more direct work with families, because they 'feel they are doing social services work'.

### **3.6 Identifying child protection needs: Creating a culture in schools**

*If there is a broad ethos of emotional safeguarding in a school, then young people will feel safer and the risks to them will be picked up or the children themselves will report them.*

(Principal Social Worker, LA1)

Children and young people at risk of harm feel more able to discuss complex matters and confide sensitive issues when they have people around them who they can trust (Lefevre, 2010). School and local authority staff in this study referred to the importance of creating an environment that facilitates early recognition of need and disclosure of abuse and neglect. By creating a culture of open communication and trusted relationships, school staff and students consistently said that students would be more ready to share their concerns and difficulties with staff. Relationship-based work also meant that staff also had a greater familiarity with their pupils and will recognise subtle changes in behaviour, demeanour or presentation which could signal difficulties. For example:

*Pastoral support relies on a high degree of attentiveness. If we know our students, we can also respond to our gut feeling if something is wrong.*

(SENCO, grammar school, LA2)

*We should know if there is a problem and our students should not need to be referred to us.*

(Deputy Headteacher/Designated Safeguarding Lead, grammar school, LA2)

*I work with kids of all needs and can watch out for any children in the school.*  
(Inclusion Officer, Academy, LA1)

*It might be not wanting to get changed for PE, so they don't show any marks on their body, or if they're self-harming they want to wear long sleeves in PE. Or it might be the fact that they suddenly become very withdrawn in the class or behave differently, or have an outburst. And if they have an outburst then yes, that's a behavioural issue, but actually the underlying issues under there are often much more subtle and it's important that we get under the skin of that to see why they've had that outburst and what the reason behind it was.*  
(Headteacher, grammar school, LA2)

Young people in the study also spoke of the challenges and sensitivities for staff in identifying needs amongst students in the school. One Year 10 student observed:

*There's probably quite a few people that I do know, but I didn't know they had these problems. So I, I guess it can be quite hard to speak of, and I really don't know how the school gets to the bottom of this. It's probably quite unspoken of, if there are issues like this, because obviously for the person's sake they wouldn't really want to be exposed in that way.*

The accessibility of staff to students was also seen as important to a culture of safeguarding and emotional wellbeing and might enable children at risk to seek help. The Inclusion Officer quoted above was based in an office located off a busy school corridor, where students could easily find her or drop by. She gave the example of 'one little boy who just needs to check in and say hello, so he always leaves his bag in here at break time'. This supportive role within the school was extended because, as well as dealing with attendance concerns, this worker also led peer mentoring activities for students.

The school counsellor at the grammar school in LA2 also commented on the need to be highly visible and 'a normal presence' in the school. To support this visibility, she carried out work in classrooms – for example, teaching on subjects such as good health and emotional wellbeing – as well as providing one-to-one support for students. She worked with an 'open door approach', to create an environment in which young people would feel comfortable about approaching her with concerns. In LA3, staff in the academy school were encouraged to spend more time with students at lunchtime: teachers could have a free school meal if they also sat at tables with students, and they were encouraged to talk to the students in their vicinity rather than to colleagues.

Head teachers also gave examples of ensuring that they were known and accessible to students. One gave the example of meeting termly with a student with Special Educational Needs, and two remained involved in teaching – one invited students to come to his office for lessons. Head teachers in most of the case study schools were located in offices that directly opened on to busy corridors in their schools. One head teacher described the advantage of such a location being that it meant that he could pop out to talk to students and students could also access him at any time because of his 'open door' policy. Such activities are not directly concerned with child protection, but they were again framed as being part of a wider ethos within the schools that enabled children and young people to approach staff if they had concerns, and which allowed staff to know students well enough to notice if something was wrong.

### 3.7 Formal systems within schools

In all of the schools, young people said that they talk to their friends first if they are in trouble but would go to teachers if a problem was serious. It is clear that in schools where support staff were known to and trusted by students, their support is accessed and students do respond to and take them up on the support that they offer. In addition to the statutory roles of the SENCO and designated lead on safeguarding, the case study schools had a variety of staff in other roles designed to support student's pastoral welfare. These staff were seen as well placed to notice if a young person was experiencing difficulties, or to be the person in whom a student could confide. These roles varied across schools, and – as the chair of the LSCB in LA3 observed, 'Schools have to find the formula that works well for them.'

Relationship-based cultures were also said to be supported by form tutor systems, although there were some variations between schools in how these were structured (e.g. laterally, across a year group, or vertically in relation to school houses). Common to all the schools was a perception that the form tutor could play a key role identifying any concerns. School systems to discuss and share potential concerns were important in ensuring this process worked effectively. These included systems to feed back to Heads of Year, and all the schools in the study had weekly or fortnightly safeguarding meetings with the designated safeguarding lead, as a check on children who were seen as potentially vulnerable, including those who were the subjects of child protection concerns or formal Child Protection Plans.

As the example of form tutoring indicates, a culture of visibility, accessibility and relationships also depends on having robust underpinning systems to deal with concerns that are identified – linking again to the emphasis on communication networks beyond the school that was highlighted in chapter two.

In all the schools the monitoring of student attendance was seen as a key tool for safeguarding. Attendance was monitored electronically, and – as noted earlier – one key theme to emerge from the research was an emphasis on child-needs led, rather than punitive, approaches to non-attendance. Again, there was seen to be a tension in this area of work, as summed up by a senior local authority interviewee:

*There is also a dichotomy in government policy – the DfE focus on attendance is about being strong, prosecuting parents. Louise Casey [Troubled Families policy initiative] is asking 'how do we support parents and families?' There are tensions for schools between balancing attainment and achievement and supporting all children and the needs of individuals. These tensions carry into exclusions and how schools deal with children who cause difficulty.*

LA1 (unitary authority) had addressed this tension through an integrated approach with a 'Behaviour and attendance advisory officer' who worked across schools. This senior professional described how there was 'a duty of care beyond the school gates' as there were often important reasons for low attendance which needed to be addressed. One of her concerns was that systematic lateness or poor attendance might indicate wider problems at home and she had developed a red, amber, green recording system to track attendance.

In a similar vein, LA3 had addressed this issue by combining educational welfare and safeguarding functions within the Educational Welfare Service (distinct from, and in addition to, Child and Family Services safeguarding functions).

## 4 Young people at the centre of good practice

*We shouldn't underestimate the skills sets young people can bring to the table around policy and practice issues. We must listen to the voice of the child.*  
(Principal social worker, LA1)

### 4.1 Involvement in policy and service development

Over recent years, there has been a significant move in education and social work towards seeing and working with children and young people from a philosophy which embraces their rights and capabilities as well as their needs and vulnerability (Uprichard, 2007). As discussed earlier, this integrated approach lies at the heart of the *UN Convention of the Rights of the Child*, and relatedly, the *Rights Respecting Schools* agenda (see Sebba and Robinson, 2010), in their efforts to involve young people as subjects in decision-making and planning about all issues which concern them, rather than just seeing them primarily as 'objects of concern' who need protection and guidance.

It is beyond the scope and core objectives of this report to discuss in depth the role of young people's participation in the schools and local authorities included in the present study. However, it is striking that a child-centred and participatory ethos was emphasised across stakeholder groups in all the schools and local authorities included in this research. As the chair of the LSCB in LA1 commented, there can be a danger of young people's involvement being superficial and tokenistic as true participation requires a paradigm shift, time and hard work. However, this caution did not appear to apply within our case studies, and a range of examples were given which highlighted an enthusiasm for working with young people as equals and 'experts by experience'.

These strengths were evident in the language and behaviours of students, school staff and senior professionals across the study. For example, in LA1 (unitary authority) the Behaviour and Attendance Advisory Officer explained:

*Good schools involve children and young people in planning. [...] The first premise of good child protection in schools is that it's got to involve the children. [...] One of the best resources are our young people. [...] Young people are their own successes.*

The participatory approach within this local authority had been led through the LSCB, with strategic support at the highest levels. The Principal Social Worker we interviewed explained the background to the work:

*We started off by asking them, 'what are the issues that you need to feel safer from?', and we told them, 'you tell us and we'll do'. So they mentioned lack of lighting and untrimmed hedges in parks which made them feel vulnerable and we were able to sort it out. It's this kind of 'quick win' that made the young people feel involved and listened to and we built on that.*

The LSCB in LA3 (London borough) had also prioritised consultation with young people – including primary school students – to inform its work. A senior manager explained:

*The LSCB have direct presentations from primary school pupils about what makes them feel safe or unsafe. [...] They told us about street lighting, broken windows, big boys and dogs. We have arranged for lighting to be improved, broken windows and doors to be fixed and the dog warden to visit the school. [...] Our detached youth team deal on the streets with the big boys!*

In LA1, the LSCB Communications Group had established a students' 'Feel Safe Consultation Group' to ensure a consistent and reliable channel of communication with children and young people in schools. The student group, as a result, has advised on a range of safeguarding and wellbeing issues, including alcohol and drug misuse, domestic abuse, safety at home and outside, mental health and exam stress. A variety of consultation methods had been used, such as a 'talk to' box into which students were asked to put all their concerns for a week. It was said that students primarily identified worries about common issues that would affect their emotional wellbeing, such as family break up, loss and bereavement. In response, the next tranche of staff training was focused on how to identify and support young people in relation to these concerns.

Recently the young people in the Consultation Group had asked for a discussion about staying safe in the parks and someone from the Highways section attended to hear what kinds of concerns young people had so strategies could be planned (with the result that bushes were cut back to enable visibility). By empowering young people to stay safe in their local situation, it is believed that they will have a better comprehension of other risks they face in their lives and be more confident in dealing with them. One reason for the success of the approach in LA1 appeared to be the broad, holistic interpretation of safeguarding responsibilities, rather than an attempt to keep child protection approaches separately defined and segregated. Another was the trusted relationships formed between head teachers, local agencies (such as the police, social work and health) and the young people. In the words of the Principal Social Worker, 'that's what we invest in'.


In LA1, young people's involvement was facilitated by dedicated 'champions' who support and develop participatory approaches across the local authority. Staff in key roles included the Behaviour and Attendance Advisory Officer interviewed for this study who played a central role in consultation, engagement and safeguarding developments within both primary and secondary schools, and facilitated the 'Feel Safe Consultation Group'. This support was said to have enabled young people to devise creative and innovative ideas, such as a 'staying safe' checklist which ensures key processes are followed (such as how and when to have the school gates locked so that there is a balance between freedom and safety). It was emphasised that young people were not just involved in planning but were increasingly taking on responsibility – for example, checking that tasks on the 'stay safe checklist' have been done.

Again, one key message from the research was the need to think beyond secondary school about participation, so involving younger children. It is not only children's developmental needs but their social and legal status which can render them particularly vulnerable. Given this, it is essential that an integrated approach is taken to educating children from the earliest possible stage so that they are better able to recognise risk and participate actively in their own protection. In LA1, children at infant and primary schools were also involved in 'feeling safe' initiatives, and one stated objective of early involvement was to ensure that by the time these children reach secondary school, participatory practice is well-embedded. The overarching intent was to convey that whatever matters to young people in respect of their safety and wellbeing also matters to the local authority. The chair of the LSCB in this area emphasised the value of this work:

*The children we see are confident and I never have to make allowances for them. We just talk normally. They know what they are going to and have been properly prepared by the schools to participate. Everyone respects them and listens to them, that's the culture ... We recently held a competition for them to design a logo for the LSCB. Hundreds of kids entered and the standards were so high. It showed they really understand the core issues, like how children might be afraid of adults and not know who to turn to.*

In addition to these wider fora, young people's involvement in agenda-setting in LA1 had also specifically drawn on the expertise of young people with direct experience of child protection systems. It was reported that a group of children on Child Protection Plans have been meeting regularly, outside of term time, working in partnership and collaborating with group leaders and qualified social workers on meaningful participation issues. At the time of the research, this group had redesigned child protection and Children in Need plans used with children in the authority to make them more user friendly, following a structure of: 'what is the problem; what are you going to do about it; how will we know that you have done it?' The child-friendly plan that resulted from this work is now used by social workers when working with children on child protection and child in need plans. The children were said to feel that they can understand better what their plan is for, and so are better able to hold workers and their parents to account

**Figure 4: Hart's (1992) Ladder of protection**



Rung 8	Youth initiated shared decisions with adults: Youth-led activities, in which decision making is shared between youth and adults working as equal partners.
Rung 7	Youth initiated and directed: Youth-led activities with little input from adults.
Rung 6	Adult initiated shared decisions with youth: Adult-led activities, in which decision making is shared with youth.
Rung 5	Consulted and informed: Adult-led activities, in which youth are consulted and informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of adult
Rung 4	Assigned, but informed: Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, decision-making process, and have a role.
Rung 3	Tokenism: Adult-led activities, in which youth may be consulted with minimal opportunities for feedback.
Rung 2	Decoration: Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, but have no input in how they are planned.
Rung 1	Manipulation: Adult-led activities, in which youth do as directed without understanding of the purpose for the activities

In thinking overall about the potential benefits of participatory approaches to good practice in child protection, it is relevant to consider Hart's (1992) ladder of participation (see Figure 4). In LA1, respondents' accounts indicated that practice extended to the top of this ladder: young people were not just consulted and informed, but were fully engaged as partners in setting agendas. This level of involvement could be seen to help situate child protection practice within a broader understanding of safety and wellbeing, drawing directly on young people's expertise in their own lives.

## 4.2 Students supporting each other

Use of peer mentoring is relatively commonplace in secondary schools across the country (Ofsted, 2010). Peer mentoring or 'buddying' schemes were used in several schools in the present study, and were said by professionals and young people to support good practice in safeguarding by creating an atmosphere of trust and safety within the school, and making it more likely that concerns or difficulties will be identified. Student groups in the case study schools commented that whilst they might talk about problems within friendship groups, peer mentors were recognised as the most likely resource with whom students might raise worries. For example:

*Some of the younger pupils especially may find it quite difficult to speak to an adult, whether it be a teacher or one of the pastoral leaders, but they would find it much easier to speak to one of the peer mentors or maybe even one of the prefects.*  
(Year 12 student)

*So you have peer mentors to like help you, if you don't want to talk to an adult you can talk to someone you feel comfortable talking to and things like that.*  
(Student Councillor)

*I think it's good to feel that maybe if you meet someone in an older year is maybe going through the same thing as you and so you could like talk to them about it and it's important to feel that it's not just you maybe, if there's someone else to talk to. It's like a support mechanism type thing.*  
(Year 9 student)

As noted earlier, one role for mentoring was to support transition from primary to secondary schools. In LA1 and LA2, sixth form and Year 10 students were involved in visiting linked primary schools. In one of the academies in LA1, every Year 7 student was linked with a Year 11 student, a system designed to ensure that each child had a named person to go to. However, systems do not always ensure relationships, and while most of the students in this school spoke very highly about mentoring arrangements, at least one found that the pairing had not been successful:

*Mentoring doesn't always work. Me and my mentor did not get on so I go to him instead [pointing to another student].*  
(Year 7 student, LA1)

In the context of a large group discussion with the School Council, it was notable that this student felt confident and safe to talk in this way; at the same time, his experience indicated that he had been successful in getting support from another older student in the school.

In the single sex school in LA3 (London borough) peer mentoring was not used, because the head teacher judged that the approach would not work well in the context of local needs, cultures and expectations. A large proportion of students in this school were from Somali and Bengali communities, with strong extended family and friendship networks. The head commented that this community context limited the girls' capacity to confide in other students for several reasons. Firstly, it was less within the cultural norm that family or private matters were discussed openly. Secondly, young people tended to worry that concerns that disclosures might be shared within their home community networks. Thirdly, and separately, this particular school had a higher number of pupils with identified safeguarding needs. It was considered inappropriate and unrealistic that peer mentors should be placed in a position where they might be hearing about very complex or worrying child protection



matters on a regular basis. Instead, the headteacher had introduced a tutor-led mentoring system, whereby tutors had one-to-one mentoring sessions with three students a week (in addition to informal contact from day to day).

Training, support and clear processes for peer mentoring were understandably seen as essential, to ensure that student-to-student support could work well as a route to safeguarding for young people. In LA1, cross-school based mentoring initiatives were used to train young people alongside students from other schools. This approach enabled sharing of good practice and consistent standards across schools but also helped young people to gain a wider understanding of work in other schools across the education authority. The student quoted above emphasised the importance of specialist training for peer mentors:

*It's not something that teachers can teach you or you kind of pick up on your own, it's something that has to be taught to you by a specialist and then you have to practise it and practise it.*

A Year Seven student in another school also warned that it was important to recognise the difficulty of the peer mentoring task:

*You've got to remember the peer mentors, they're humans too, they're humans too they're not 'super', although most of the time they are. They're not 'super', unfortunately, so they can have problems too and sometimes it, your own welfare can be more important.*

In interviews with peer mentors and the adults who trained them, discussions focused primarily on broader understandings of safeguarding, in relation to student safety and emotional wellbeing. Supporting students with worries about conflicting relationships with family and friends, difficulties with school work, and concerns about bullying were seen as central to the mentoring role.

In one academy in LA1, mentors received three days of training in a range of issues, including SEN needs, and what constitutes healthy and appropriate relationships, including about issues of domestic abuse. Specifically in relation to child protection, mentors were said to have been trained in understanding and recognising the four main categories of abuse, and what to do and not do if a child discloses to them. They are expected to take any child protection concerns immediately back to their supervisors. Supervision is provided by teachers or teaching assistants who are known well to the mentors, and who have usually been involved in their initial peer mentor training. Mentors in one school referred to their supervisors as 'their direct boss'.

It was reported that some children had made disclosures of abuse to peer mentors and staff in schools in the study were confident these disclosures had been dealt with immediately and appropriately. There are critical responsibilities for peer mentors in judging when confidentiality has to be broken, and information shared. A Year 11 student in LA1, who was an experienced peer mentor, explained:

*Peer mentors have to say to the students if they specially come in this room, if they're talking about anything, is - this is private and confidential unless we think you're going to get hurt. So they can talk to us about anything, so they can talk to us about whether they're being bullied, whether they've fallen out with their friends, problems at home, just things in general.*

Mentors were also involved in supporting students who were struggling academically. In one school in LA1, the School Council had initiated a buddy reading system to assist younger students who found reading difficult. Every Monday morning, younger and older students paired up for half an hour of reading. A Year 11 mentor involved in this scheme commented that 'if you can read well everything else gets easier from there'. This same mentor also talked about the implications for young people of being labelled or stereotyped, noting that schools created difficulties for students referred to as 'problems', and arguing for the need to look beyond presenting problems to underlying difficulties. As this example indicates, the welfare-focused approach of mentoring appears to positively influence wider understandings of need. In the other school in LA1, young people involved in the school's Student Research Group explained that they tended to notice if others appeared to be feeling vulnerable, and would ask mentors to check if they are okay. In LA1 and LA2, it was reported that mentors were given formal training about what to do if a student disclosed abuse. The SENCO in one of the case study schools said that she drew on her prior experience of the court system in training staff and mentors on how to contain and support a disclosure of abuse, whilst avoiding asking questions that could be seen as influencing or distorting a young person's account should a case go to court. Clear guidance was given to mentees and staff about the boundaries of the discussion and the importance of referring concerns.

The involvement of primary and secondary school-aged children in peer mentoring, and mentoring training was also said to help peer mentoring become firmly established as a school culture by the time young people enter the secondary school system, as well as enabling secondary schools to benefit from the skills and experience of continuing mentors.

## 5 Key messages and conclusion

The last three chapters have reported a number of strategies, principles and processes which appear to be supporting good child protection practice within secondary school contexts. The case study local authorities and schools involved in this study all had robust policies and procedures, rooted in statutory guidance, embedded across their systems and which were providing a solid underpinning to their work. But good practice was consistently described in this research as going 'over and above' the statutory minimum requirements to develop more creative, participatory, strategic and responsive innovations.

Core themes will be briefly summarised within this chapter, highlighting key messages which schools and local authorities in other areas could consider in further developing their own practices.

### 5.1 Flexible approaches with clear strategic vision

Participants in this study, young people and professionals alike, spoke with enthusiasm and pride about approaches which were working particularly well in their school or local region. The differing demographic contexts and forms of governance within which they were operating highlighted the importance of schools and authorities developing flexible approaches which were responsive to local need – at a school and local authority level – situated within a wider policy framework and social environment.

No one 'formula' or model was appropriate for every school in our case studies. It was clear that developing a culture with a commitment to safeguarding and children's wellbeing as a central priority had required much energy and commitment. The importance of a clear strategic vision from senior managers in schools and local authorities was emphasised in all the case study areas. Across areas, this entailed a strategic priority for partnership working and interagency communication, alongside recognition of the safeguarding and child protection needs of secondary school-aged children. This provided the context for the embedding of child protection practice within wider safeguarding processes.

Leadership was seen as particularly important in a time of change, where both schools and local authorities are operating in the midst of significant financial constraints combined with a rapidly changing policy context (for example, in relation to 'academisation' of local authority schools). There was evidence that models of good practice had been diluted by budgetary constraints. At the same time, it was said that experienced managers and practitioners valued, and endeavoured to protect, the known benefits of established systems for integrated working, including the Common Assessment Framework and Lead Professional role.

**Good Practice Principle 1** Child protection in schools is given strategic priority by leaders in schools and local authorities. At a time of change and financial pressure for education and other children's services this both protects existing good practice and drives forward improvements in this key area of practice. This will include schools examining their approaches to child protection as part of internal self-assessment processes

## 5.2 A culture of partnership working in safeguarding practice

At local authority level, Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) were, unsurprisingly, seen as key to facilitating a culture of interagency working, acting as a hub for cross-professional liaison, training and the sharing of good practice.

Equally important was an emphasis on embedding safeguarding roles within Educational Welfare Services, enabling recognition of the potential child protection issues that could underlie problems related to behaviour or attendance. Bringing safeguarding and education expertise together in these forums facilitated common understandings and priorities, supporting enable early identification and intervention. Dedicated roles - including 'champions' for safeguarding or integrated working – offered a way of extending awareness, support and advice across local authority areas, and were seen as effective in authorities ranging from the London borough to a large county council.

Partnership working is not only important for local authority staff, and a consistent message to emerge from the research was of the need for schools to ensure they have frameworks in place to ensure that key school staff have access to informal consultation and support. An outward-facing culture, in contact with key professionals in local agencies, was seen to facilitate good practice in child protection by enabling trust and the early sharing of concerns.

**Good Practice Principle 2** Safeguarding is a shared responsibility for all those working in the school and all staff understand how their role contributes to the overall work of the school in supporting and protecting its students.

**Good Practice Principle 3** Strong communication networks between schools and local authorities assist with recognising risk and determining thresholds and enable empathic consideration of possible underlying meanings of problematic behaviour by young people. Cross-area and cross-school approaches to child protection, such as a centralised advisory service and dedicated safeguarding roles, support the effective use of resources in a time of economic constraint.

## 5.3 Identifying child protection needs

Across stakeholder groups, there was wide recognition of the significant pressures on staff in secondary schools, particularly in relation to the size and perceived complexity of secondaries (compared to primary schools), and to the perceived impact of school league tables on teachers' capacity to attend to children's wider needs.

It was recognised that school staff may feel ill-equipped to assess child protection concerns. As well as access to strong communication networks, as noted above, staff training in schools was seen as key to embedding an understanding of child protection within the school, and to assisting recognition of need among all staff – from bus drivers to senior leaders – who spend time with students in their everyday school lives.

Time spent with students was also seen as important in identifying needs, in line with an emphasis on a participatory and child-centred ethos in schools (see below). Adults and young people consistently emphasised the importance for schools of creating an environment where young people feel comfortable to reveal their concerns about abuse or other safety concerns – to adult staff or to fellow students – and where students are known well enough for undisclosed concerns to be recognised.

Good practice arrangements enabled staff to have regular formal and informal contact with students, for example, through tutoring systems, teachers sitting with students at lunchtime, headteachers or other staff having an open door policy, and counsellor drop-in arrangements. Such arrangements helped staff to develop a greater familiarity and understanding of their students, and so empowered them to attend to subtle changes in behaviour, demeanour or presentation which could signal difficulties. Having a culture of open communication, respect and trusted relationships between students and staff additionally increased the likelihood young people would feel comfortable in discussing complex matters or sensitive issues.

**Good Practice Principle 4** Schools and local authorities have established systems for regular on-going training and professional development of all staff who have contact with young people, as well as systems that ensure accessible consultation and support for any staff in schools who may be in a position to identify child protection concerns.

**Good Practice Principle 5** Schools systems enable staff to get to know their students well, through regular formal and informal contact within the school and assist staff in identifying child protection needs.

#### **5.4 Child protection within a broad definition of safeguarding**

In a study focused on child protection in schools, it was striking that student and professional stakeholders, across case study areas, consistently emphasised the need to think broadly about safeguarding, as part of the spectrum of young people's safety and well-being in the school and community. Both top-down strategies (such as developing student awareness about risk through the PSHE curriculum, enrichment programmes, tutor support and use of the Pupil Premium to provide school counselling) and bottom-up approaches (such as peer-mentoring and student-led safety initiatives) were conceptualised holistically as concerned with young people's welfare and aspirations. This approach was seen as valuable because it avoided the separation of welfare needs and child protection risks into silos; more generally, a holistic approach meant that students' resilience, awareness and life chances could be boosted across the spectrum.

A broad conceptualisation of safeguarding was also helpful in situating child protection within school's key priority areas. In a context where exam results are often prioritised as the foremost outcome indicator for schools, a senior manager in one area commented that some schools can struggle to see the benefits for children's learning (and hence for schools' academic profile) of a broad emphasis on children's welfare. By contrast, the case study schools – which included very high performing schools in terms of exam performance – argued very strongly that an emphasis on student welfare and wellbeing was pivotal in ensuring academic success.

One possible danger arising from a broad conceptualisation of safeguarding is that it could distract from the understanding of significant child protection concerns. Might serious safeguarding concerns become hidden or marginalised if they are not named and discussed as readily as general wellbeing and community safety issues? At secondary school level it is particularly important to engage young people actively in promoting their own safety and wellbeing across all the domains of their life experience, and this depended on awareness.

Across case study areas, schools and local authorities were engaging with this challenge, and gave examples of a range of ways of building students' awareness of, and language for talking about, child protection risks. As a pastoral leader commented, the term 'safeguarding' did not have a meaning for young people. But they did need to be equipped

with a conceptual understanding of what danger, risk and harm might mean, in relation to both themselves and their peers, so that they would be able to identify when they should be concerned. The approaches taken varied, but examples included discussion embedded in the curriculum (e.g. within PSHE) and cross-school and within school events, such as commissioned drama productions.

**Good Practice Principle 6** Attending to students' welfare in the broadest sense goes alongside explicit attention to specific child protection needs. As a result, students are aware of potential risks, and have the language to voice concerns, at a stage in life when they are likely to encounter new potential risks, but are also developing increasing agency and responsibility.

## 5.5 Student-centred and participatory approaches

The development of student-led and student-centred approaches within schools and local authorities is a key element in the development of good practice in child protection in secondary schools, for example, through student involvement in the development of policy and systems, and in peer mentoring and support as part of frameworks to support identification of needs. This focus was emphasised across stakeholder groups in all the schools and local authorities included in this research. There was an enthusiasm for working with young people as equals and 'experts by experience', which was evident in the language and behaviours of all.

Young people were involved centrally in policy and service development and had been at the forefront of new innovations. Such cultures were not easily developed. Ensuring that young people's involvement is truly participatory rather than tokenistic – within the framework, for example, of Hart's (1992) ladder of participation – is not a quick or easy task. Time and resources are needed to ensure that students are properly prepared for their involvement and that consultative methods are appropriate to the needs and preferences of the young people themselves. It was clear that, where this had been achieved in the case study authorities and schools, the dividends more than repaid any effort: young people were leading the way and creating not only child-centred but child-led systems.

Peer mentoring schemes were not seen as appropriate in all schools, because of cultural or contextual issues but could evidently play a very valuable role in facilitating an atmosphere of trust and safety within the school, making it more likely that concerns or difficulties will be identified at an early stage. The peer mentors in this study were able not only to discuss child abuse and neglect in explicit ways but to engage with the complex and sensitive nature of the topics that other students might raise. There are, however, challenging responsibilities for peer mentors in managing potential disclosures of child protection needs. Training, support, supervision and clear processes are essential, to ensure that student-to-student support can function appropriately as a route to protection.

**Good Practice Principle 7** A student-centred and participatory ethos is key to ensuring student welfare and wellbeing. The benefits of genuinely participatory approaches, as reported by both adults and young people, depend on the strategic prioritisation of child-centred working, and dedicated investment of time, training and resources.

## **5.6 From primary to secondary?**

The research highlighted interesting issues about the extent to which different child protection approaches are necessary in primary and secondary schools. Emphasis on integrated working, and on whole family approaches to understanding child protection, served to highlight the need to consider child protection and safeguarding as an integrated whole, spanning the whole pupil journey through primary and secondary schools.

Unifying roles and structures – such as the LSCB, or local authority staff working across primaries and secondaries – were said to help achieve this integrated understanding. At the same time, peer mentoring and support for transition from primary to secondary school, was seen to support early recognition of child protection concerns, but also to share and model broader understandings of school cultures where student safety and wellbeing is prioritised.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

The research reported here was focused on learning from examples of well-developed practice in child protection in secondary schools in England. The study did not seek to evaluate practice in the schools or local authorities studied, but rather to learn from their experience how other schools or local authorities might develop their work in this critical area.

We did not evaluate ‘outcomes’ of schools’ practice, and indeed it is difficult to gauge how success might be understood in this complex field of practice. High rates of referral to child protection services might reflect effective identification of need, or they could indicate a failure of early identification and intervention. The converse is also true. A larger, longitudinal study would be required to track cases within schools, if the aim was to evaluate the effectiveness of the systems and practices reported here.

Nonetheless, the consistency of themes and priorities emerging from the research is striking. The case studies purposely spanned diverse schools and local authorities, in their size and structure and the populations that they serve. While models of good practice were tailored to local needs and contexts – and this flexibility was seen as important – different models were underpinned by common principles. The principles identified – and particularly, the emphasis on integrated working, on participatory and student-centred working, and on situating child protection within a broad understanding of safeguarding – are not new. Indeed, current school and local authority systems had clearly been built on histories of investment in these key areas of children’s lives.

The challenge for schools and local authorities is to maintain and extend existing good practice in financially challenging and organisationally uncertain times. But respondents gave examples of how resources could be shared and protected – to some extent at least – and schools, including academies, were actively engaged in cross-school and local authority partnership working, often led through young people’s participation. Child protection in secondary schools is often seen as a neglected and challenging area of practice. The experience of participants in our case studies indicates the value of working to overcome such challenges.

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# Appendix 1: Methods

## Knowledge review

The project began with a critical knowledge synthesis review to bring together academic and policy literature and practice guidance from education, social work and related fields (e.g. school nursing), in relation to safeguarding, inter-professional working and child protection in secondary schools. The purpose of this review was twofold:

- To inform the future development of good practice guidelines, and form the basis of the annotated reading list presented in Appendix 3
- To situate subsequent analysis of school case studies within existing knowledge with reference to child protection and inter-professional working between schools and other local frameworks, such as Local Safeguarding Children's Boards and children's social care teams.

## Identifying good practice case studies<sup>6</sup>

Publicly available sources of information were reviewed to identify (a) local authority areas with evidence of well-developed services in relation to child protection for secondary school-aged children and (b) particular secondary schools which could be examined as case studies of good practice within those local authorities.

Good practice local authorities were defined as those which met the following criteria, which could be evidenced in formal documentation such as reports by Ofsted or Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs):

- Evidence of young people's involvement in the development and scrutiny of local authority safeguarding systems and policies
- Evidence from Ofsted reports on local authority children's services since 2010 that aspects relating to safeguarding and child protection were designated to be at least 'good', including indications of good practice in safeguarding in education services
- Established systems for integrated working between schools and children's social care (e.g. team around the child; social workers based in schools), since it is well-established that effective integrated working is a critical facilitator of effective child protection practice within schools (e.g. DCSF 2010; Munro 2011).
- Evidence from Ofsted reports that secondary schools in the local authority had been rated as good or outstanding in relation to safeguarding, student support and/or pastoral care.

Additional supporting evidence was sought through internet searches on potential local

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<sup>6</sup> Ethics approval (Reference 1112/08/09) was secured from the University of Sussex Social Science Cluster Research Ethics Committee (C-REC) before data collection commenced.

authorities, using key words relevant to the study focus<sup>7</sup>, and using key words in conjunction with names of shortlisted authorities.

Case study schools were selected on the basis of three key criteria:

- Documentation in the most recent Ofsted inspection reports of good or outstanding practice in relation to safeguarding, wellbeing and pastoral care; schools were not excluded if they were not overall judged by Ofsted to be 'outstanding schools'
- Evidence of well-developed school systems to prioritise children and young people's involvement in the development and scrutiny of school policies and systems, demonstrating the commitment to young people's rights and participation, as well as to their welfare and safety (for example as evidenced by UNICEF Rights Respecting School status, in school websites, and in Ofsted inspection reports)
- Recommendation as examples of well-developed practice from key local authority stakeholders.

At the same time, across the four authorities, schools were sampled to ensure representation of the following school types:

- both co-educational and single sex schools
- schools teaching Key Stage 3 and 4, with and without post-16 provision
- at least one academy, one comprehensive, and one selective grammar
- at least one faith school.

### **Local authority case studies**

Initial scoping generated a shortlist of 10 authorities, of which four were included in the final study. Initially, it was intended that the school sample would be drawn from just two local authorities, sampled to encompass geographical and demographic variation, and variation in authority type (e.g., urban/metropolitan; county council, unitary authority). However, to ensure that the sample could include six school case studies, and to maximise the opportunity to learn from a variety of school types and school populations, sampling extended from two to four local authorities:

- Local authority 1 (LA1) is a unitary authority in the north of England
- Local authority 2 (LA2) is a county council, neighbouring LA1
- Local authority 3 (LA3) is a London borough
- Local authority 4 (LA4) is a county council in the south of England.

LA1 and LA3 were the two 'core' authorities for the study. In each, interviews were carried out with three local authority professional stakeholders, with a local authority young people's forum, and in two schools. In LA2 and LA4, interviews were conducted with one local

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<sup>7</sup> Examples of key words and phrases used included 'teacher social work collaboration'; 'school social work'; 'youth participation'; 'youth forum'; 'school council outstanding'; 'safeguarding outstanding'.

authority professional stakeholder, and in one school. Details of interviewees in each local authority are listed in Table 1.

### **Local authority interviews**

Telephone interviews were conducted with representatives of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and with local authority service managers or other senior personnel with responsibility for safeguarding within secondary schools or children's social care. The aim of these interviews was to provide a check on identification of school case studies and contextualise those case studies within a wider understanding of local authority systems that enable good practice. Interviews with professional stakeholders addressed barriers and facilitators in relation to the development and maintenance of good practice in child protection in schools (e.g. in relation to local policies and systems, integrated working frameworks, training and information sharing).

Interviews within a local authority level forum for young people were carried out in LA1 and LA3<sup>8</sup>. Interviews with the young people's fora addressed their involvement in the development and scrutiny of policy and systems in relation to child protection in schools; barriers and facilitators in relation to the development and maintenance of good practice in child protection in schools; and recommendations for the development of good practice guidelines.

### **School case studies**

The final school sample included six schools, selected to reflect a wide range of educational structures and pupil demographic characteristics.

In LA 1, two co-educational academies were selected. Both were identified from Ofsted inspection and local stakeholder recommendations as leading examples in the local area of work within a broader frame of safeguarding, participation and student wellbeing – for example, in relation to anti-bullying and peer mentoring work. These were also the smallest schools in our sample, with student populations of less than 500.

In LA2, the school selected was a co-educational selective grammar school situated in a small town. This school was identified in relation to its reputation for work to support the overall emotional wellbeing of pupils. This school has a student population of approximately 1200 young people.

In LA3, one of the selected schools was a single sex (girls) comprehensive, with a population of just under 1000 students, of whom a high proportion are from minority ethnic groups. This school was rated as outstanding by Ofsted and recommended by local authority stakeholders. The second school in LA3 was a faith-based academy combining primary and secondary provision, with over 1000 students across the school as a whole.

In LA4, a co-educational comprehensive was selected on the basis of recommendation from local authority stakeholders and Ofsted inspection as having particular strengths in relation to safeguarding and student wellbeing, supported by peer mentoring and good school-parent partnerships. This school has a population of almost 1000 students.

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<sup>8</sup> In LA1 this was done as a group interview; in LA3 one young person from the Youth Council took part.

Reflecting their differing location and school types, the schools also differed in their student intake. The two academies in LA1 were non-selective and drew pupils in from the surrounding town and villages. By contrast, the selective grammar school in LA2 admitted students on the basis of an entrance exam, and pupils often travelled long distances to get to school. The London based schools had much more varied student populations. The girls' school, for example, had more than 40 feeder primary schools.

Varying student populations also corresponded to variations in student need or vulnerability to disadvantage. At the time of interview, unlike all other schools included in the study, there were no children on child protection plans in the selective grammar. In both of the London schools, 50 per cent of students were eligible for free school meals. Both London schools had student populations from diverse backgrounds and ethnic groups (for example, the girls' comprehensive had a high proportion of Bangladeshi and Somali pupils).

### **School interviews**

Within each case study school, interviews were conducted with school staff (see Table 1), to address:

- approaches to young people's awareness of and engagement with safeguarding and child protection processes in the school
- student involvement in the development and scrutiny of school policies in relation to child protection, physical health and well-being, and behaviour;
- interagency involvement with school child protection policies and practice
- barriers and facilitators in relation to the development and maintenance of good practice in child protection in schools (e.g. in relation to development of cultures of trust and help-seeking
- training of staff and/or information sharing between schools and other stakeholders).

Where possible, within the timeframe for the work, interviews were also conducted with school governors, including the designated safeguarding governor for each school. These interviews addressed: approaches to young people's awareness of and engagement with safeguarding and child protection processes in the school; student involvement in the development and scrutiny of school policies in relation to safeguarding and child protection, physical health and well-being, and behaviour; interagency involvement with school governance, particularly in relation to child protection policies and practice; and barriers and facilitators in relation to the development and maintenance of good practice in child protection in schools (e.g. in relation to training of staff and governors).

In addition, at least one group interview was conducted with young people in each school. Given the timescale and ethical sensitivities of the work, these interviews did not seek to include young people with personal experiences related to child protection. Rather, they included established groupings of young people, such as school councillors or peer mentors. These interviews addressed: approaches to young people's awareness of and engagement with safeguarding and child protection processes in the school; student involvement in the development and scrutiny of school policies in relation to safeguarding and child protection, physical health and well-being, and behaviour; perceptions of how the school has developed a culture of trust and listening in relation to student concerns, well-being and behaviour; and recommendations for good practice development within schools.

## **Analysis**

A detailed note was made of each interview, and subsequently interview data were analysed thematically, with researchers leading analysis for the interviews they had conducted, and other team members contributing through discussion and review in analysis meetings. Given that interviews were not transcribed, quotes presented in the following are based on researchers' concurrent notes during the interview, and are not verbatim transcript of speech. Where interview extracts are not attributed to an individual, this has been done intentionally to protect anonymity.

Analysis focused on the specific research objectives, along with themes and issues emerging over the course of the research. In addition, if a theme emerged from analysis of one source (e.g., a school or local authority case), analysis of other participant groups was revisited in relation to that theme to (a) triangulate, and provide a check on themes emerging (e.g., checking school stakeholders' perspectives alongside local authority respondents' accounts) and (b) identify higher-order cross-cutting themes in the data.



## Appendix 2: Key policy, guidance, inspection reports and research: An annotated bibliography of resources to support schools in their safeguarding role

### Key Policy and Practice guidance

Policy document	Web address	Key focus
DfE (Department for Education) (2013) Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.	<a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory/g00213160/working-together-to-safeguard-children">http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory/g00213160/working-together-to-safeguard-children</a>	Key interagency advice and guidance on policies, procedures and systems which should be put in place to ensure children's safety and promote their well-being. Definitions on recognizing and responding to different forms of abuse are included.
Department for Education (2012) Behaviour and discipline in schools - a guide for headteachers and school staff	<a href="https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standards/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00026-2012">https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standards/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00026-2012</a>	Provides an overview of the powers and duties for school staff in relation to issues such as bullying, their powers to discipline pupils, including use of reasonable force, and allegations of abuse against staff. It is for individual schools to develop their own best practice for managing behaviour in their school.
Department for Education (2011) Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Teachers and other Staff - Guidance for Local Authorities, Headteachers, School Staff, Governing Bodies and Proprietors of Independent Schools	<a href="https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/ppublicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00061-2011">https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/ppublicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00061-2011</a>	This guidance covers procedures and processes to manage cases of allegations that might indicate a person would pose a risk of harm if they continue to work in regular or close contact with children in their present position, or in any capacity.
Department for Education and Skills (2006) Common Assessment Framework, Nottingham: Department for Education and Skills Publications.	<a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/strategy/integratedworking/caf">http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/strategy/integratedworking/caf</a>	The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used to assess children's additional needs to determine where support and intervention might be provided through integrated services which are focused around the needs of children and young people. School staff are likely to be involved in leading or contributing to CAFs.
Department of Health, Department for Education and Employment & Home	<a href="http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyA">http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyA</a>	This guidance describes the Assessment Framework and expectations of how it should be used.

Office (2000) Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families, London, HMSO.	<a href="#">ndGuidance/DH_4003256</a>	While children’s social care generally takes the lead in assessments, other professionals (including schools) should contribute to the holistic, multi-disciplinary assessment.
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### National reviews of child protection

Document	Web address	Key focus
Laming, the Lord (2009) The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report. London: The Stationery Office.	<a href="https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/HC%20330">https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/HC%20330</a>	Although this report (commissioned by the previous Government) does not represent current policy, this report provides a useful overview of developments in safeguarding since Independent Statutory Inquiry following the death of Victoria Climbié.
Munro, E. (2010) The Munro Review of Child Protection, Part One: A Systems Analysis.	<a href="https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/TheMunroReview-Part%20one.pdf">https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/TheMunroReview-Part%20one.pdf</a>	The independent review by Professor Munro was commissioned by the incoming Coalition government. This report provides an overview of the strengths and limitations of the child protection systems in place
Munro, E. (2011) <i>The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final report</i>	<a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/munroreview">www.education.gov.uk/munroreview</a>	Munro’s final report, which recommended full scale reform of child protection processes across agencies. Useful guidance on the complexities of determining thresholds, interagency working and staff training and development

### Inquiry reports and serious case reviews

Document	Web address	Key focus
Brandon M., Belderson P., Warren C., Howe D., Gardner R., Dodsworth J., and Black J. (2008) Analysing child deaths and serious injury through abuse and neglect: what can we learn? A biennial analysis of serious case reviews, 2003-2005, London: DCSF.	<a href="https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-RR023">https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-RR023</a>	An analysis of 161 serious case reviews undertaken 2003-2005. Contains key messages about inter-agency working to protect children and highlights safeguarding risks to those in their secondary schools years.
Brandon, M , Sidebotham, P.. Bailey, S., Belderson , P (2011) A study of recommendations arising from serious case reviews 2009-2010, Dept for	<a href="https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/RSG/AllPublications/Page1/DFE-RR157">https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/RSG/AllPublications/Page1/DFE-RR157</a>	A critical, thematic analysis of recommendations from 33 serious case reviews completed in 2009-2010. Considers what part recommendations can play in aiding agencies and individuals to learn

Education/ University of East Anglia and University of Warwick.		lessons to improve the way in which they work both individually and collectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
Laming, the Lord/ Department of Health and The Home Office (2003) The Victoria Climbié Inquiry: Report of an Inquiry by Lord Laming, Cm. 5730, London: Department of Health.	<a href="http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4008654">http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4008654</a>	An in-depth review of individual and systemic failures which contributed to the death of Victoria.

### Ofsted Reports

Report	Web address	Key focus
Ofsted (2011) Personal, social, health and economic education in schools	<a href="http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/researchsources/personal-social-health-and-economic-education-schools">http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/researchsources/personal-social-health-and-economic-education-schools</a>	This report (based on evidence from inspections of PSHE in schools in England 2006-2009) highlights strengths and limitations in teaching and can be used by schools to further develop their practice, e.g. around discussion of sensitive and complex issues.
Ofsted (2011) Safeguarding in schools: best practice	<a href="http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/researchsources/safeguarding-schools-best-practice">http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/researchsources/safeguarding-schools-best-practice</a>	This report illustrates and evaluates the features of best practice in safeguarding, based on inspection evidence 2009-10 where safeguarding had been judged outstanding. It also draws on a more detailed analysis and evaluation of safeguarding practice in a small sample of outstanding schools.
Ofsted (2011) Children's Care Monitor 2010: Children on the state of social care in England. Reported by the Children's Rights Director for England. Ofsted, Manchester.	<a href="https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/RSG/AllRsgPublications/Page14/100098">https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/RSG/AllRsgPublications/Page14/100098</a>	The views of 1,870 children and young people receiving services from 168 different social care services across England on how social care was doing in 2011.
Ofsted (2011) The Voice of the Child: Learning Lessons from Serious Case Reviews.	<a href="http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/researchsources/voice-of-child-learning-lessons-serious-case-reviews">http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/researchsources/voice-of-child-learning-lessons-serious-case-reviews</a>	This report provides an analysis of 67 serious case reviews conducted between 1 April and 30 September 2010. The main focus of the report is on the importance of listening to the voice of the child.

## Selected research reports

Report	Web address	Key focus
Baginsky, M. (2007) Schools, Social Services and Safeguarding Children: Past practice and future challenges. NSPCC	<a href="http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/research/findings/schoolsocialservice/fullreport_wdf54280.pdf">http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/research/findings/schoolsocialservice/fullreport_wdf54280.pdf</a>	An examination of safeguarding practices in schools within three local authorities, revealing challenges schools face and containing recommendations about staff support, training and interprofessional working.
Chase, E., Warwick, I., Hollingworth, K., Maxwell, C., Chalmers, H. and Aggleton, P. (2010) Promoting the Health of Children and Young People through Schools: the Role of the Nurse. Report to the Department of Health. London: Institute of Education	<a href="http://www.saphna-professionals.org/node/438">http://www.saphna-professionals.org/node/438</a>	The study examined the different ways in which nurses are enabled and supported to contribute to the promotion and safeguarding of children and young people's health and wellbeing within school settings.
Cossar, J. Brandon, M. & Jordan, P. (2011) 'Don't make assumptions': Children and young people's views of the child protection system and messages for change, Norwich, University of East Anglia/Office of the Children's Commissioner.	<a href="http://www.childwatch.io.no/news/2011/dont-make-assumptions">http://www.childwatch.io.no/news/2011/dont-make-assumptions</a>	The research sought children and young people's views of the child protection system to improve responses to abuse and neglect. Findings about how children develop their own ways of dealing with their worries are relevant to schools, as are the importance of consultation processes involving young people.
Davies & Ward, H. (2012) Safeguarding Children Across Services: Messages from Research. Jessica Kingsley, London.	<a href="https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-RR164">https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-RR164</a>	This research provides an overview of the key messages from 15 studies commissioned to provide a stronger evidence base for the development of policy and practice to improve the protection of children in England.
Martin, K., Atkinson, A. and White, R. (2011). <i>Safeguarding Children: Council Developments</i> (LG Group Research Report). Slough: NFER.	<a href="http://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/LSGC01/LSGC01.pdf">http://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/LSGC01/LSGC01.pdf</a>	A study of how 5 local authorities were developing their safeguarding practices in a changing policy landscape. Includes consideration of interagency working and referral processes.
Morgan, R. (2011) Messages for Munro, London, Ofsted.	<a href="http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/messages-for-munro">http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/messages-for-munro</a>	This report gives the views of children in care and care leavers at three separate events held to find out children's views for the review being carried out by Professor Eileen Munro.
Mortimer, J. North, M., Katz, A & Stead, J. (2012) "You have someone to trust": Outstanding	<a href="http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content">http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content</a>	This study focuses on best professional practice in safeguarding and responding to child protection

<p>safeguarding practice in primary schools. London: NSPCC</p>	<p><a href="#">626</a></p>	<p>concerns in primary schools. The study identifies models of good practice as the basis for guidelines and information to teachers, school leaders and other children's professionals.</p>
<p>Radford, L., Corral, S., Bradley, C., Fisher, H., Bassett, C., Howat, N. with Collishaw, S. (2011) <i>The Maltreatment and Victimization of Children in the UK: NSPCC Report on a National Survey of Young People's, Young Adults' and Caregivers' Experiences.</i> London: NSPCC.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/research/findings/child_abuse_neglect_research_PDF_wdf84181.pdf">http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/research/findings/child_abuse_neglect_research_PDF_wdf84181.pdf</a></p>	<p>Research findings on child maltreatment in the United Kingdom, looking specifically at the prevalence and impact of severe maltreatment, which is associated with poorer emotional wellbeing, self-harm, suicidal ideation and delinquent behaviour.</p>
<p>Wilkin, A., Murfield, J., Lamont, E., Kinder, K. and Dyson, P. (2008). <i>The Value of Social Care Professionals Working in Extended Schools.</i> Slough: NFER</p>	<p><a href="https://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/SCX01/SCX01_home.cfm?publicationID=76&amp;title=value%20of%20social%20care%20professionals%20working%20in%20extended%20schools">https://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/SCX01/SCX01_home.cfm?publicationID=76&amp;title=value%20of%20social%20care%20professionals%20working%20in%20extended%20schools</a></p>	<p>This research explores the impact of social care professionals working within the multi-disciplinary environment of an extended school. It identifies a range of different models of multi-agency activity between social care professionals and extended schools, as well as a number of key issues for consideration (including challenges, key factors for success and benefits) when adopting such a collaborative approach.</p>

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