

Safeguarding Early Adopters programme

Learning example



Early Adopter: Tameside

Learning theme: Voice of the child and Integrated Neighbourhood Model

Early Adopter name	Tameside
Multi-agency learning theme/issue	<i>Voice of the Child and Integrated Neighbourhood Model</i>

Introduction

Tameside Safeguarding Children Partnership have been working closely to strengthen the collective voice and influence of children and young people and to develop an integrated neighbourhood model that enables local communities and services to identify emerging issues and deliver placed based solutions.

Background, aims and objectives

The Voice of the Child will be secured at the heart of the future local safeguarding arrangements with performance and decisions scrutinised against a set of measures that have been devised and promoted by young people.

There will be the opportunity for practical suggestions from children and from practitioners to be developed via the Neighbourhood Learning Circles.

Our new local safeguarding arrangements seek to deliver more rigour in holding each partner agency to account, and more effectiveness in engaging each partner agency in safeguarding Tameside's vulnerable children.

Approach

A [Voice of the Child Strategy](#) was devised and launched by the Youth Council in March 2018. Members of the Youth Council now deliver training on the 'Voice of the Child' as part of the partnerships multi-agency training programme. The principles and expectations outlined in the strategy underpin the training and will be used to develop a scrutiny and challenge framework.

A Youth Challenge Panel is being developed to scrutinize the effectiveness of service provision. Once trained, members of the youth challenge panel will seek assurance from agencies that their self-assessment (S.11 & 2.175) and audits are a true reflection of their practice. Agencies will be required to respond to any challenges identified through this

process and report back to the Youth Challenge Panel. Any common themes identified, or issues of concern, will be reported up to the Neighbourhood Learning Circles and the Safeguarding Children Executive Partnership for further action.

A Children's Independent Advocate was recruited in October 2018 to ensure the issues that children and young people identify are reported to the Safeguarding Children Executive Partnership and responded to accordingly.

We are developing an Integrated Neighbourhood Model through which we will both strengthen joint working between partner agencies on the ground, and also develop local partnerships in a governance structure which engages all of the partners. This will be done both through Neighbourhood Learning Circles which engage every school three times per year, and through introducing a Team Around the School model, in which multi-agency safeguarding partner proactively meet in each school to discuss children of concern. In this way every school will be fully integrated in our local safeguarding arrangements, being held to account for their performance and being able to raise issues of concern.

The Children's Independent Advocate is working with schools to develop their youth forums before creating a Youth Participation Network that connect the various youth forums together. This will provide a collective 'Voice of the Child' across Tameside and strengthen their position as critical stakeholders that can drive improvement and influence decision making.

Challenges

Engagement with all services and schools from the outset has proven to be unrealistic. There isn't the resource to roll out the Team Around the School Model to all schools at the same time. Instead a phased approach has been piloted in Q3 of 2018/19 with Phase 2 to be implemented in Q4 and rolled out to a wider number of schools.

Schools are at different stages in the development of their school councils/forums and therefore some are more willing to engage with the Children's Independent Advocate than others. The Children's Independent Advocate has been working with a secondary school to promote their work on the Safer Social Network Activity Pack (SSNAP) to other secondary schools. In addition to the obvious benefit of encouraging take up of SNAPP (an already successful peer led approach) it has been used as a means to engage schools and to help them develop a youth led project which could be the beginnings of a strong school council/forum.

Successes

Members of the Youth Council are delivering the 'Voice of the Child' training as part of the TSCP Training Programme. They are being paid for their services and using the money to support the Youth Council meetings and other initiatives.

Young People were actively involved in recruiting to the Children's Independent Advocate post. There was a professional's panel and a separate young peoples' panel. There was disagreement in selecting the successful candidate which ultimately led to the job description for the post being amended based on suggestions from young people and the young people's 1st choice candidate being appointed.

Conclusion

Over the past 12 months Tameside has set out its stall through the publication and launch of the Voice of the Child Strategy, delivery of 'Voice of the Child' training, and recruitment to the Children's Independent Advocate post. Children and young people have played a pivotal role in enabling those things to happen and so we're already being true to the vision of the strategy. Children and young people have been;

- given an equal voice in decision making
- empowered to deliver their own training
- trained to scrutinize our safeguarding arrangements and service delivery

However, those are only part of building up the necessary infrastructure and support required to deliver change. That change is yet to be delivered and we need to continue to work with children and young people to do that. The development of the Youth Challenge Panel is a crucial next step to improving the Partnerships scrutiny and challenge functions. The Children's Independent Advocate and Neighbourhood Coordinators continue to develop positive relationships with the various services and schools in the 4 locality areas that will enable the voice of the child to be heard and responded to by the relevant audiences i.e. Neighbourhood Learning Circles and Safeguarding Children Executive Partnership.