

Safeguarding Early Adopters programme

Learning example – Learning Hub model

Early Adopter: Bexley, Greenwich, Lewisham

Learning theme: Learning Hub Model

1. Introduction

One of the five priorities chosen by the tri-borough early adopter site (Bexley, Greenwich and Lewisham) was to address local practice challenges and specifically to complete the implementation of the Bexley local learning hub, for Lewisham and Greenwich to evaluate the usefulness of the learning hub model and for all 3 areas to consider roll-out of a hub model across the tri-borough for any future shared priorities.

The Learning Hub model was developed in Bexley in 2016 under the previous safeguarding partnership arrangements (Bexley Safeguarding Children's Board). The driver for implementing the Learning Hub model in Bexley was to bring the Safeguarding Board closer to frontline practice in order to be able to learn from practice more effectively. From 2016, the Learning Hub considered a range of practice issues by facilitating multi-agency events which triangulated evidence from a variety of sources and gave the practitioners attending the space and information to explore practice challenges and to come up with improvement recommendations for the Board to review. At the point of Bexley moving to its new partnership arrangements in October 2018, a revised Learning Hub model had been agreed by the three safeguarding partners to take forward the partnership's new priorities for its first year – the initial timetable and plan for the Learning Hub's activity is set out in the attached document.

The tri-borough's second priority on geographical areas (specifically looking to establish a programme of safeguarding partnership improvement and delivery priorities that are shared across the new police basic command unit (BCU) and three neighbouring London Boroughs – Lewisham, Greenwich and Bexley) informed the focus of the Learning Hub's initial work, considering children and young people who go missing and are at risk of criminal or sexual exploitation.

This report describes the activity of the Learning Hub in Bexley between October 2018 and June 2019.

2. Background, aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of Priority 1 – Learning Hub model (addressing local practice challenges) – were as follows:

- Bexley to share the Learning Hub model and approach with Lewisham and Greenwich by focusing on practice relating to children and young people who go missing and are at risk of criminal or sexual exploitation
- Lewisham and Greenwich to consider what can be borrowed from the model (if anything) and used locally? Does the model add value?

- The tri-borough to explore if the model can work for a shared practice priority across 3 areas?

3. Approach

Terms of reference for the Learning Hub were developed in Bexley to be included in their published arrangements document (launched in October 2018). The initial methodology for planning and delivering the Learning Hub is described below:

Preparatory work

- Three safeguarding partners put forward nominations for membership of the Learning Hub according to the priority being considered and agree a shortlist – the full Partnership Board reviews and signs off the membership
- The partnership operations team led by the Practice Review and Learning Manager work with a nominated lead from one of the three safeguarding partners to produce an initial delivery plan which includes the following:
 - Current data and performance
 - Success and impact measures
 - Relevant statutory and other guidance
 - Evidence from previous Learning Hubs (where relevant)
 - Evidence from visits and observations by the Practice Review & Learning Manager
 - Evidence from self-assessments and peer challenge
 - Evidence from serious case and learning reviews, child deaths, LADO, national reports, inspection reports (including from other areas)
 - An introductory letter and information pack (including terms of reference) is sent to the Learning Hub members ahead of the first Learning Hub event
 - Individual conversations with Learning Hub members are offered by the partnership operations team to address any questions about membership of the Hub.

Learning Hub Month 1

- Learning Hub members' hopes and concerns are shared and addressed
- Success measures for the priority are reviewed
- Learning Hub members are asked to feed back what is working well and what the challenges are for multi-agency practice in relation to the priority?
- The Practice Review & Learning Manager presents the information in the delivery plan
- The Learning Hub members agree a plan for multi-agency auditing, consultation with children, young people, their families, and other practitioners, as well as identifying any other evidence for the Practice Review and Learning Manager to gather.

Month 2 activity

- Children's cases are selected for auditing by the nominated lead from one of the three safeguarding partners along with the Practice Review and Learning Manager
- Practitioners from across agencies who have worked on the child's case are invited to a reflective discussion that forms part of the audit

- Some of the Learning Hub membership contribute to the case file reviews and reflective discussions
- The partnership's operations team collate the findings from the audits which in turn feed into an overall report on the Learning Hub's activity across the 4 month cycle.

Month 3 activity

- Learning Hub members nominate a colleague to attend a practitioner feedback session where additional views on what is working well and what the challenges are for multi-agency practice in relation to the priority?
- The partnership's operations team coordinates consultation activity with children, young people and their families – feedback sessions involve some of the Learning Hub membership
- The partnership's operations team collate the findings from this feedback activity which in turn feed into an overall report on the Learning Hub's activity across the 4 month cycle.

Learning Hub Month 4

- The partnership's operations team update the delivery plan with the evidence gathered during the previous two months and prepare a findings report for the Learning Hub members to consider
- The Practice Review and Learning Manager presents the updated delivery plan with information from Month 2 and 3 activities at the final Learning Hub
- The Learning Hub agrees any recommendations it wishes to make both on an operational and strategic level to the Partnership Board.

Priority 1 - Reduce the number of children and young people who are missing and are at risk of criminal or sexual exploitation (October 2018-January 2019)

- In order to facilitate the sharing of the model, 7 observers from Greenwich and Lewisham were identified to attend the Bexley Learning Hub in October 2018 and pre-observation phone calls took place to brief observers
- A post-Learning Hub session debrief took place with observers facilitated by University of Bedfordshire (the programme's academic partner) to explore the merits and potential value of the model
- 4 multi-agency audits were commissioned by the Learning Hub and were carried out in November 2018
- A practitioner feedback session took place in December 2018
- Interviews with young people as part of the preparatory work for this priority were evaluated
- The Practice Review and Learning Manager engaged with a small number of parents to obtain their views on missing children and young people in December 2018
- The Learning Hub met in January 2019 (again with representatives from Lewisham and Greenwich observing) to consider the Hub's findings and to draft its recommendations
- The Learning Hub made 11 recommendations which were reviewed and refined by the Partnership Board in January 2019

- A system-wide learning event took place in January 2019 to share the recommendations for Priority 1 with 100+ practitioners and to launch Priority 2 (a number of guest speakers were invited to participate in relation to both priorities)
- An action plan to take forward the recommendations was developed by the partnership operations team along with the lead from the police (to be reported back on at the Partnership Board in July 2019).

Priority 2 - Respond effectively to the mental ill health of parents so they are supported to give their children the best start (January-April 2019)

- The Learning Hub met between January and April 2019 led by Bexley CCG and supported by the partnership operations team
- 107 referrals into the MASH where mental health was flagged as a concern were reviewed as a starting point for identifying children's cases for auditing (8 children's cases were selected for further auditing during February and March 2019)
- Feedback activity took place in March 2019 – a session for practitioners and a series of interviews with 39 parents
- The Learning Hub made 9 recommendations that were agreed by the Partnership Board in April 2019
- A system-wide learning event took place in April 2019 to share the recommendations for Priority 2 (again with 100+ practitioners) and to launch Priority 3 (again with guest speakers who were invited to participate and offer their perspectives on the priorities)
- An update on progressing work on these recommendations will be given by the CCG leads in October 2019 to the Partnership Board.

Priority 3 – Getting basic child protection right (April-July 2019)

- Evidence collection for this priority took place during 2019:
 - Children's Social Care Practice week including 4 multi-agency audits
 - LB Bexley complaints
 - LSCB multi-agency audits (2018)
 - Learning reviews (including SCRs and SARs)
 - Quality assurance quarterly reports (from Children's Social Care)
- The Learning Hub met in April 2019 to consider the emerging issues identified by the partnership operations team from all of the above evidence and an initial plan for 'fixing' these issues in May and June 2019 was developed
- The Learning Hub will meet in July 2019 to review progress with 'fixing' the issues.

4. Challenges

A number of challenges have emerged through the course of running the Learning Hub over the last 8 months. These are described below along with some of the adjustments made to the Learning Hub model in response to these challenges:

- Preparation of the Hub members – from the experience of Priority 1, more time was needed in the first session to explain the culture and purpose of the Learning Hub to its members before embarking on the scoping for the priority. Rather than pack more into one session and/or extend the session time considerably, an additional Learning Hub pre-meet was arranged for Priority 2 to cover the following:
 - Learning Hub culture and culture of learning

- The Learning Hub model and the new partnership arrangements
- “Hopes and worries” exercise and working agreements
- “Success measures” exercise

The pre-meeting for Priority 2 was successful in providing a foundation for Hub members in terms of understanding the purpose and approach of the Learning Hub as well as taking pressure off the Month 1 session in terms of covering too much material.

- Identifying the recommendations (Learning Hub Month 4) – experience drawn from the Learning Hub for Priority 1 – it was identified that the Learning Hub needed a draft set of recommendations to work from in the Month 4 session in order to produce a final set of recommendations by the end of the session and to send to the Partnership Board (timetabled to take place on the afternoon following the Learning Hub in the morning). For Priority 2, CCG leads and the partnership operations team drafted a set of recommendations from the emerging evidence to give to the Learning Hub to consider and develop a final set from that starting point.
- Developing the action plan to take forward the recommendations - experience drawn from Priority 1 – as Priority 2 was being launched, the partnership operations team were producing an action plan to take forward the recommendations from Priority 1 including identifying and agreeing the operational leads to progress each action. Once leads were agreed, meetings were arranged to ensure that leads were on board and understood their part of the action plan. This process took longer than anticipated and impacted on momentum following the sign-off of the recommendations. The three safeguarding partners set a target of two weeks from the recommendations being set for an action plan to be drafted in order for them to agree its final sign-off and dissemination. A much speedier process was followed successfully for Priority 2.

5. Successes

The University of Bedfordshire's evaluation found the following in relation to the Learning Hub as a model:

- It is a highly structured programme of work aiming to explore a practice issue (a partnership priority) to make recommendations to Partnership Board
- It is practitioner-led and draws together professionals from across agencies
- It includes within its cycle of activity interviews with children, young people, families and practitioners as well as children's case file audit and the analysis of performance data and other related research and guidance.

The recommendations developed from Priority 1 and 2 have been well received by operational leads in Bexley who recognized the issues contained within the recommendations as being ‘the real issues’ challenging the system. Therefore, they agreed that the Learning Hub as a model had achieved its aim of learning from frontline practice.

The ongoing challenges within the delivery of the model are set out in section 4 above and these have been responded to in reflecting on and refining the model over the last 8 months.

6. Conclusion

The Learning Hub is an innovative and dynamic model that engages practitioners in reflecting critically on practice and multi-agency working and feeds in learning from a variety of sources including the experiences of children, young people and their families. The model works at a pace, is dependent on a well-resourced operations team and the commitment of the three safeguarding partners, and requires effective forward planning to ensure that impact is measured at strategic points going forward.

The tri-borough is meeting in late June 2019 to consider its future plans and how to build on the work of this programme including the effectiveness of the Learning Hub model and its potential application to a tri-borough practice priority.