

exchange

Working together to keep children safe

Editorial

Sharing solutions...

Welcome to the first edition of Exchange. It aims to create a platform for LSCBs and ACPCs to share ideas and solutions in the new landscape of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.

Exchange is produced and distributed by the NSPCC, and we are very keen that colleagues from across the professional disciplines and agencies are able to contribute to the debate and exchange of information about the most effective ways of safeguarding children and young people.

In this issue you will find articles written by colleagues working in local authorities and also in the NSPCC.

Whilst LSCBs are now in place in England, the timescales in Wales and Northern Ireland are different. In our next issue, Welsh minister Jane Hutt, will share her views on the role of the LSCBs in Wales.

In the meantime, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has announced the establishment of a Regional Safeguarding Board for NI. This will be in conjunction with a much greater emphasis on safeguarding throughout government departments and the roll out of accreditation arrangements in the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults Order 2003 which is unique to NI. The impact of these important reforms will be important to watch, not least the different structural arrangements in NI but the capacity to transfer to other jurisdictions.

More of the same?

If it walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then it is a duck. Could the same be said for Area Child Protection Committees (ACPCs) in their transition to Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs)?

ACPCs have been around for over 30 years, albeit with a number of different names in that time, such as area review committees and joint child abuse committees. The question is, will the change to LSCBs mean business as usual or to put it another way; a duck by any other name?

We have seen significant improvements in inter-agency cooperation. However, ACPCs are looking tired and a change of name alone will not achieve the necessary improvements.

Committees and subcommittees have been the traditional way to run ACPCs, but when was the last time we asked whether they actually work? Clearly, they have succeeded up to a point; but are they the most effective means of organising our business? What better time to ask these fundamental questions, if LSCBs are to be effective in safeguarding children?

The City of York LSBC plans to move away from subcommittees and use lead officers instead. Lead officers will develop their objectives by consulting service users, safeguarding agencies and others. They will then be free to decide the most effective means of delivering each goal.

If we are committed to safeguarding children, LSCBs must be effective. How often do we produce procedures that are then filed, rarely used and have little impact on practice? We propose that detailed development plans should be produced; identifying how each objective will be developed, implemented and measured. Tasks will only be considered complete once the board has deemed them effective.

Inter-agency safeguarding arrangements are at a crossroads; we can either offer more of the same (a duck by any other name), or embrace the new opportunities on offer.

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Photography by Andrew Olney, posed by a model

Fine judgements

One of the most challenging child protection decisions faced by any practitioner is whether to return home an infant who has suffered suspicious injuries, particularly when the perpetrator is unknown. Too frequently, decisions are made inconsistently, and with insufficient reference to evidence-based practice. That can lead to both false negative (where the infant receives inadequate protection) and false positive (where the system intervenes inappropriately) errors.

These themes are explored in a recent Wiley/NSPCC publication – *Fine Judgements*, written by Peter Dale and NSPCC colleagues. The book draws on original research into serious injuries to infants where there are discrepant explanations, and into the views of parents about child protection interventions. It also discusses broader research into factors associated with serious or fatal abuse, and the effectiveness of child protection systems.

The book concludes with three chapters on the assessment of such cases. It argues that the Assessment Framework is inadequate in this context and debates key issues around the potential for change in families. Indicators of positive change (or the absence of it) are provided.

The NSPCC believes that the book will be as applicable to LSCB members (with their various duties under the new Working Together guidelines) as it is to practitioners.

The authors intend to deliver a series of training events based on the book in the UK this year, the first of which is in London on 24 May. Details will be available on www.in-trac.co.uk and www.peterdale.co.uk. The book can be ordered from www.nspcc.org.uk/inform at the price of £22.50.



Dale, P., Green, R. and Fellows R. (2005) *Child Protection Assessment Following Serious Injuries to Infants: Fine Judgements*. Wiley, Chichester.

Female sex offenders: it's not really an issue is it?



“But it happens so rarely it’s not really worth bothering about...”

“It’s just so hard to imagine that women would do something like that to children...”

Recent NSPCC research shows that females engage in a range of sexually abusive behaviours, and it is estimated that females are involved in up to 5 per cent of sexual offences committed against children. The offences are often very serious, commonly involve violence, and have a wide range of negative and far-reaching consequences for victims.

During the course of the research and after having discussions with a range of professionals working in both the child protection and criminal justice systems, the difficulties they face in dealing with this kind of abuse were frequently highlighted. Practitioners often felt ill-equipped to deal with cases involving females, unsure if the needs of the victims or offenders were the same, or what services were available. As women tend to have greater physical contact with children, some abuse can also be carried out under the guise of childcare, making it particularly difficult for professionals to identify abusive situations.

The NSPCC report examines the international literature, providing an overview of what is currently known about this often overlooked group of offenders. In an effort to better understand how we as professionals respond to this issue, the report also includes surveys of ACPCs and Multi-agency Public Protection Panels (MAPPPs) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as interviews with professionals working with female sex offenders. Whilst highlighting areas of good practice, particularly in initiatives for working with female sex offenders and the training provided by many ACPCs, the findings also draw attention to a number of areas that need more work.

An executive summary of the report is available at: www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/Research/Findings/FemalesWhoSexuallyOffend_ifega27751.html. A copy of the full report can be purchased for £17.50 from the NSPCC Inform website at: www.nspcc.org.uk/inform

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Biggest ever doctor child protection training

Safeguarding Children – Recognition and Response in Child Protection is the first ever nationwide course to help doctors recognise and respond to possible cases of child abuse. It will be rolled out to doctors training in paediatrics through this project, made possible with a grant from the Department of Health.

Every paediatrician will have to take a recognised child protection course as part of their training. It is hoped that eventually everyone studying paediatrics will undertake the RCPCH and NSPCC training course too.

Recognition and Response in Child Protection has been designed by the RCPCH, NSPCC and the ALSG. It consists of a day-long intensive course run by experienced trainers, and is

supported by an interactive DVD and training pack. The pack uses slides, case histories and practical examples to help doctors be more aware of possible cases of abuse when undertaking routine examinations.

The DVD and training pack will also be available to doctors working in Accident and Emergency departments and GP surgeries. The rollout of the course to both training and qualified paediatric specialists will help ensure that, for the first time, there is a nationwide training standard for all doctors and specialists who work closely with children and young people.

RCPCH president elect, Dr Patricia Hamilton, said: "Doctors are a crucial link in the child protection chain and we want to do everything possible to



enable them to recognise and respond to possible cases of abuse appropriately. The training course is designed to be beneficial to trainees and experienced doctors alike."

If you would like details of the training day and pack, please contact the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health on tel: 0207 307 5631.

Everybody's business, raising community awareness of safeguarding

In a bid to raise awareness amongst the wider community, Bromley Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB – formerly Bromley Area Child Protection Committee) posted an advert in a council booklet circulated in a local newspaper (News Shopper, November 2005) to almost every household in Bromley. This advert was essentially the BSCB's poster advising people on what to do if they are concerned about the welfare of a child. It is hoped that this not only raises awareness about how to respond to a concern, but also serves to highlight the fact that child protection is everyone's business. The advert will also go out in next year's council booklet, and it will be interesting to see if there is any subsequent increase in the referral rate as a result of this awareness-raising exercise.

If you'd like to find out more about this campaign, contact: Dee Bunbury (BSCB development officer). Tel: 0208 461 7563 Email: dee.bunbury@bromley.gov.uk

The NSPCC would also be pleased to hear about other local initiatives to feature in Exchange. Please contact Sue Woolmore with any details.

**ARE YOU WORRIED
A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON
IS BEING ABUSED?**

CHILD PROTECTION

IF SO, YOU SHOULD
TELEPHONE...
**SOCIAL
SERVICES**

Monday to Friday
8:45am - 5:00pm

Bromley West (Pepper)
020 8659 2131

Bromley East (Orpington)
01689 836900

Out of hours emergency
duty social worker: **020 8464 4848**

Social Services have a responsibility to protect children
and will be pleased to offer you confidential support.

Bromley ALSG Social Services & Housing

Emotional harm and neglect

Would you like to be part of a learning project to improve *Every Child Matters* outcomes for children?

We are a research team at the University of East Anglia's School of Psychosocial Sciences and Social Work investigating multi-disciplinary work with children and families. We work with children's services, formative Local Safeguarding Children Boards and other agencies developing joint practice with children. A current focus is on children at risk of emotional harm and neglect.

All five key *Every Child Matters* outcomes are likely to be severely compromised for these children. Neglect and emotional abuse appear regularly in reviews of serious child abuse and child deaths. There are problematic issues at every stage: definition, causes, case formulation, decision-making, partnership with family members, inter-agency work and intervention.

On an expenses-only basis, we work closely with agencies, LSCB managers and practitioners, to create joint terminology, learning tools and protocols that are evidence-based, up-to-date and user-friendly. We tailor them to meet local needs through collaboration with local inter-agency groups. We can also offer follow-up advice and evaluation with reference to a central Inter-Agency Support Group drawn from health, children's services and the voluntary sector.

Our goal is to make a difference to outcomes for children in this key but complex area. If you are interested in joining this project please contact in the first instance either:

Dr Ruth Gardner tel: 0107 825 2727

Email: rgardner@nspcc.org.uk or

Professor David Howe tel: 01603 592 072

Email: d.howe@uea.ac.uk

Preventing child sexual abuse NSPCC campaign



Photography by Andrew Olney, posed by a model

Preventing child sexual abuse will be the theme of a major awareness campaign to be launched by the NSPCC in May 2006. While the primary audience for the campaign will be children and young people aged 11 to 16, particularly those who are currently experiencing child sexual abuse, it will also be relevant to other young people, parents, professionals, and other adults.

The campaign aims to encourage children and young people to speak out about sexual abuse, and to think that "it's wrong, it's not my fault, and I want it to stop." This is based on the knowledge that, while awareness of child sexual abuse is very high among adults, it is relatively low among children and young people. Research also indicates that 72 per cent of sexually abused children do not tell anyone at the time of the abuse.

Christopher Cloke, head of child protection awareness at the NSPCC said: "Children and young people who have been sexually abused feel incredibly isolated, particularly when they are not able to talk to anyone. Through our campaign we want young people to feel that they are not alone and find someone they can talk to."

The campaign will comprise advertising, press and PR activity, and the distribution of materials for children and young people. We shall also look at policy and practice reform.

The NSPCC is keen to consider how LSCBs can support this campaign, including adopting and distributing materials which promote both the campaign and the work of the LSCB. If you have ideas, and would like to work with the NSPCC please contact Sue Woolmore, whose contact details are below.

NSPCC and ChildLine joining together

ChildLine's free helpline became part of the NSPCC on 1 February 2006.

The announcement follows months of talks, after ChildLine approached the NSPCC to discuss how their vital service could best be secured and developed to support the thousands of vulnerable children and young people who already turn to it each day.

ChildLine has helped almost two million children since it was founded by Esther Rantzen in 1986, but the challenging and competitive fundraising environment has meant that the helpline has never been able to meet the enormous demand from children.

ChildLine's incorporation as a distinct service into the NSPCC will allow it to answer many more calls from children. The ChildLine name and memorable phone number, 0800 1111, will remain unchanged and it will remain as a free 24-hour service for any child or young person with a problem.

The NSPCC free 24-hour Child Protection Helpline, 0808 800 5000, will continue to offer support and guidance to anyone with concerns about the welfare of a child.



A joint voice for children – Chris Kelly, Carole Easton, Esther Rantzen and Mary Marsh

To discuss NSPCC's contribution to your LSCBs and ACPCs, or to comment on, and to contribute to *Exchange*, please contact:

Sue Woolmore

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EC2A 3NH Tel: 020 7825 2500 www.nspcc.org.uk
Registered charity number 216401

NSPCC
CHILD PROTECTION
HELPLINE
0808 800 5000

NSPCC
Cruelty to children must stop. **FULL STOP.**