

# **School Safeguarding Audit (Section 11)**

**2023-24**

**Reporting on the academic year 2022-23**

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**(FINAL)**

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# Croydon Schools Safeguarding Audit 2022-23

## Introduction

The purpose of this report is to update the Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP) on the completion of the annual school self-assessment safeguarding audit. It also serves to inform schools about trends, areas for development (key recommendations) and strengths across the borough.

*Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are **discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.***

Schools are required to have their own policies, procedures and practice in relation to child protection and safeguarding. These are linked to other policies in school and are reviewed and amended by the Governing Body with advice from the local authority (LA).

Schools and colleges have a key role to play in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. *Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities (in relation to their education functions) and governing bodies of maintained schools and further education institutions (including sixth form colleges) to exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at a school, or who are students under 18 years of age attending further education institutions. The same duty applies to independent school under section 157 of the same Act.*

Whilst there is no statutory requirement for schools to complete this audit there is an expectation from the Council that this will be completed and the return rate is high, with **ALL** schools completing it.

The audits have been reviewed by the Education Safeguarding Lead and the majority were found to be reflective and completed to an appropriate level of self-challenge. A number of areas around high data or comments on teaching of safeguarding themes will be followed up with individual schools. Key recommendations following the review of the audit returns is included in this report along with a detailed action plan for the LA to support schools in strengthening their knowledge and implementation of safeguarding practice within their provision.

The self-assessment audit is for head teachers and governors to assure themselves that appropriate challenge is provided with rigour and that action is then taken on the findings. It is not possible to corroborate the audit findings through this report alone. A number of follow up actions will therefore be undertaken by the LA to validate the findings. Two schools have submitted their audit since a deep dive visit was requested.

Those schools where a need for significant areas of improvement, or repeated areas of development are required, will be contacted by the Education Safeguarding Lead and supported in making relevant changes.

Catherine Bennett.  
Education Safeguarding Lead  
January 2024

## 1. Purpose and Rationale

**1.1** Section 11 of the Children's Act 2004 and section 157/175 of the Education Act 2002 requires the local authority, maintained schools and other education providers (including independent schools) "shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to [their] conduct are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school". The purpose of the school self-assessment Safeguarding Audit 2023 ("the Audit") is to ensure the necessary arrangements have been made and children are being safeguarded.

**1.2** The audit is largely an education provider completed self-audit using a standardised template provided by the Local Authority. This year, there are three versions which has enabled SEND provisions and nurseries to respond to more appropriately targeted questions, relevant to their intake of pupils. This process supports the statutory requirements placed upon the Local Authority, ensuring our compliance and serves as further evidence for the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership. The safeguarding arrangements in schools selected are examined in much the same way as an OFSTED inspection. The LA received in total 149 responses from school/providers and the findings from this report are based on these responses. (*Excluding academy trusts who have submitted their own version*). This includes 15 independent schools whom 14 have all consistently completed the LA audit.

## 2. Audit Response Rate

**2.1** A year on year comparison shows there continues to be an increase in audit responses received by the deadline of 10<sup>th</sup> November. This year 80% of schools submitted their audit by the initial deadline compared to 67% last year. It was noted that Specialist/PRUs (52%) and post 16 provisions (57%) had the lowest response rate by the deadline whereas 86% of secondary, 85% of primary schools, and 80% of nurseries submitted within the expected timeframe.

**2.2** 97% of audits (LA version and own academy version) were returned this year compared to 100% last year. Due to workload and commitments, it was decided that I would not send multiple reminders and emails to chase the individual schools. Schools were consequently advised that if their audit was not received, an unannounced safeguarding visit would be completed in the Spring term. This will result in 5 provisions requiring a safeguarding visit.

## Reviewing Previous Recommendations

Recommendation from LA and CSCP	Action/Outcome
<p><b>Recommendation 1:</b> Explore the quality of the visitor information provided and ensure it includes relevant information to ensure concerns are reported in a timely manner.</p>	<p>CB completed 55 formal school visits throughout the academic year with additional, informal visits to school also taking place. On every occasion, schools have a leaflet on poster which provides visitors with safeguarding information. All included what the types of abuse are and who to report to if there are concerns about a child. There were several leaflets which did not include whistleblowing processes, so recommendations were provided for this to be added.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2:</b> Schools to be upskilled on understanding the risks of children who go missing from home and care and the relationship between this and CCE/CSE. This will be through information sent and opportunities to attend LA led training.</p>	<p>In March 2023, CB and manager ran a session on this. There was a reasonable take up and a couple of schools have since requested this as training for their leadership team.</p> <p>This will be re-offered to schools at a small cost as a traded training session.</p> <p>Education representatives are now part of the daily missing meetings, and this allows us to get information from schools and provide advice for specific students. It is also helping us to identify key schools where there are multiple students who have been missing from home/care.</p> <p>In addition, KCSIE magnified the link between children missing from education and those missing from home as well as asking schools to consider distinguishing between missing from education and absent from education. This has resulted in further questions within the 2023 audit.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b> Gain clarity around transition programmes provided by schools for Y6 pupils around safeguarding themselves in high school and when out in the community.</p>	<p>We ran the safeguarding transition day again for the second year running with success, and within this the youth engagement service attended to be available for schools to discuss pupils of concern.</p> <p>A further piece of work specifically around transition from Y6-7 and Y11-12 would be beneficial to explore what is in place from schools.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4</b> Explore what can be provided for face-to-face training and more teaching materials on FGM, forced marriage and Honour Based Abuse</p>	<p>An FGM training event was circulated to all schools which was online and interactive.</p> <p>Further exploration to continue.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5</b> Further exploration around the types of incidents related to child-on-child abuse to clarify the level of severity. Where there are concerns, a visit will be completed to unpick the situation, explore the curriculum and assist school in reducing the concerning behaviour presented by the pupils.</p>	<p>This year's audit has broken down the information requested further to help identify the types of child-on-child abuse. School visits completed also allowed for discussions with, and recommendations for schools.</p> <p>A reviewed version of the 'Taking Action on Sexual Abuse in Schools' handbook which I created two years ago following the OFSTED report on this subject. This provides schools with up-to-date information on the Croydon context as well as recommended resources, websites, a model policy, staff training slides and parent leaflet.</p> <p>When school safeguarding reviews take place, I look at the curriculum content for safeguarding themes and provide feedback and recommendations where needed to improve the learning for students.</p>

<p><b>Recommendation 6</b> Bullying, including cyber-bullying is showing a significant increase on the previous year. Schools to be provided with support and resources to help address these challenges and reduce the number of incidents in the future.</p>	<p>Further information has been provided via email, including resources and website signposting. In addition, the questions have also been broken down to allow more in-depth analysis of answers and allows identification of key issues within specific schools or areas. The DSL check-in meetings has also allowed for us to have guest speakers such as 'ParentZone Local' to talk to DSLs about cyberbullying, offer workshops for parents and provide resources within their websites.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7</b> Following 'Child Q', further training to be offered to schools to build on their knowledge of searching procedures but more importantly, their understanding of 'adulthood' and the impact on young people.</p>	<p>This is an ongoing area which Croydon are working with Merton and Lambeth to build a cross borough offer of training. Mark Malcolm is now representing Croydon within this project.</p>

### 3. Role and Responsibilities of the DSL

One of the developments to the audit this year was for schools to self-reflect on their role and responsibilities as the safeguarding lead. The aim of this was not only to enable the lead DSL to ensure processes and procedures are in place and they have secure knowledge of safeguarding but also that the deputy DSLs are secure to the same level.

Overall, it showed the knowledge and processes reported to be consistent with both the DSL and DDSL.

All DSLs must be a member of the senior leadership team and have their role and responsibility reflected in the job description. The audit exposed that this was not the case in nine schools.

There were a couple of areas which will need resolving. These are

- All schools having a teacher responsible for the education of children who are looked after by the LA, currently ten schools do not have this in place.
- All schools should maintain a safeguarding log to track who CP status, numbers of referrals etc, 15 stated they do not currently exercise this practice.

*With both points, this can be addressed through emails to identified school head teachers, speaking to head teachers at the head's breakfast to reinforce the importance of role, and adding information to reinforce discussions to the LA education bulletin.*

The hard work of our DSLs does not go unnoticed and between them they attended Child Protection conferences for 741 pupils in the last academic year. The majority of DSLs (107) attended all meetings but a few (20) only attended some, which indicates that other school commitments such as teaching may impact on availability.

#### Recommendation

**All DSLs must have their role and responsibility reflected in the job description in line with point 103 KCSIE 2023.**

#### Recommendation

**School audit visits will explore the following as stated in KCSIE 2023** *Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure the designated safeguarding lead has the appropriate status and authority within the school or college to carry out the duties of the post. The role carries a significant level of responsibility and the*

*postholder should be given the additional time, funding, training, resources, and support needed to carry out the role effectively.*

## 4. Safer Recruitment, Training, Policy and Procedures

- 4.1** This year's data continues to confirm that **ALL** Croydon schools stated they were compliant with the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (KCSIE). The audit shows that this good practice applies to safer recruitment practice for staff/volunteers and governors and that this practice appears to be fully embedded within Croydon education provisions. All provisions have a member of the interview panel with safer recruitment training with many having two or more members. **ALL** school/providers maintain a single central record of checks on all staff/volunteers and governors.
- 4.2** Three provisions reported that their Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) required an update in Designated Safeguarding Lead training as this had not been completed within the last two years. Further details of training opportunities have been provided to schools as a priority to ensure they are up to date and compliant with expectations.
- 4.3** The data this year showed that 100% of schools reported that staff members had attended whole school safeguarding training, and all schools continue to have additional processes in place to update staff on information and guidance on safeguarding which builds onto the formal training they receive.
- 4.4** The audit found that 100% of schools stated that they had included safeguarding in their induction procedures for all new staff (including volunteers and temporary staff) with two identifying some updates needed. Some of the ways this is; KCSIE module online, PowerPoint summary with the DSL, leaflet, quick reference guide and a video of the annual safeguarding training.
- 4.5** 100% of provisions have someone who has successfully completed the required safer recruitment training on their interview panel with many having more than one with safer recruitment training on the panel.
- 4.6** All schools reported staff members had read and signed to show they have knowledge and understanding of Part A of the current Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance and schools have been creative with questionnaires and surveys to check understanding.
- 4.7** Visitors are made aware of safeguarding procedures and how to report a concern. Some of the responses included having leaflets, information on the electronic sign-in, posters around school and information on the reverse of the visitor's pass.
- 4.8** There were 60 reported positive DBS disclosures received in the last academic year containing details of cautions, warnings, reprimands, convictions or additional police information.

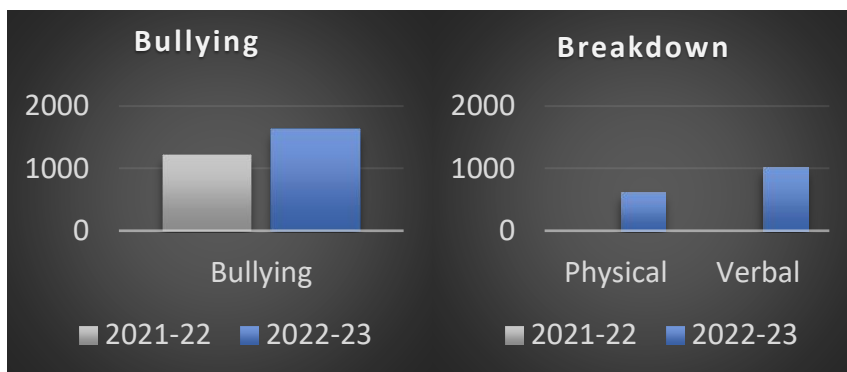
## 5. Safeguarding Recording, Monitoring and Referrals

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Every member of staff who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in safeguarding children and consider at all times what is in the best interests of the child.



It is the responsibility of all professionals to ensure that all children are safeguarded. This should be done by actively encouraging members of staff to work together proactively with children and families who may need help and for this to happen as soon as possible so that children are protected harm. Therefore, it is important there are systems in place to support and promote good practice in this area.

- 5.1 The audit identified that 100% of education providers keep their child protection record separately from child's main school file and in a locked cabinet or through a secure, online system and that all child protection concerns were recorded legibly, dated and signed with the information contained in child protection records only shared on a need-to-know basis. These figures remain consistent year-on-year.
- 5.2 Statutory guidance and procedures state that every council has a duty to manage allegations and concerns about any person who works with children and young people in their area. This includes council staff, staff or partner agencies and volunteers. Croydon Council complies with this duty by employing a dedicated member of staff known as the Local Authority Designated Officer (or LADO)
- 5.3 With the audits received through the Croydon format, this academic year there were 446 low level concerns raised by school staff, leading to 128 individual reported discussions with the LADO a decline from last year of 189. These discussions led to 59 formal referrals to the LADO.
- 5.4 The data reported by schools through shows incidents of physical/verbal bullying. There were 1627 reported incidents of bullying recorded, which was 415 **more** than last years reported figures of 1212. We continue to see the impact of Covid-19 lockdown where schools continue to need to develop student's social skills and relationship interactions. This year to improve analysis we have collated separate data for physical and verbal.



- 5.5 Cyberbullying – see online safety P17 of this document.
- 5.6 The audit data found that 3035 pupils had been removed from the school roll in during the academic year. This is a decrease compared to last year where the number was 3109.

### Recommendation

**Bullying, is showing a significant increase on the previous year. Schools to be provided with support and resources to help address these challenges and reduce the number of incidents in the future.**

## 6. Thematic Focuses

This report continues to take a thematic approach focusing on key themes for information and data purposes including: Extremism and Radicalisation (including hate crime), Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), Children Missing from Home or Care, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DASV), child on child abuse, Online safety and mental health, Early Help, Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

ALL provisions are raising awareness of a variety of safeguarding themes with their students to varying degrees. School visits will continue to explore what is offered at an age and developmentally appropriate way.

It is important to note that there were a couple of SEND schools who do not teach the pupils about going missing, for example, because the students have significant/severe disabilities and completely reliant on adults to move them and meet their basic needs.

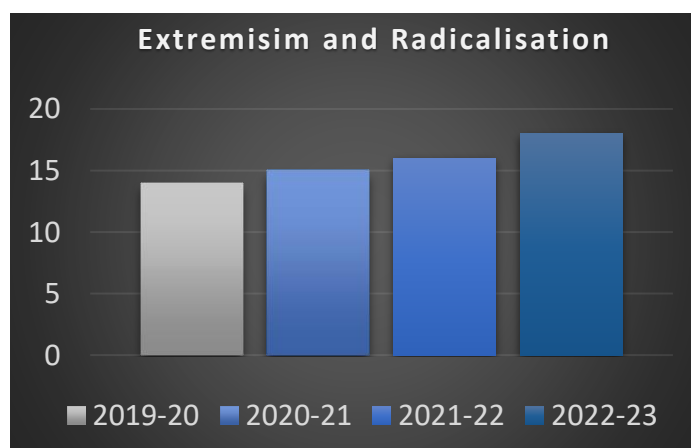
## 7. Extremism & Radicalism (including incidents of Hate)

- 7.1 The audit asked schools if members of the Leadership Team have attended the Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent" (WRAP) Training or other training linked to raising awareness of extremism and radicalisation. The audit found that 97% of providers have taken up this training opportunity for *at least* the lead DSL with the remaining scheduled. This is compared to 88% previously.

Curriculum content included accessing resources and services such as.

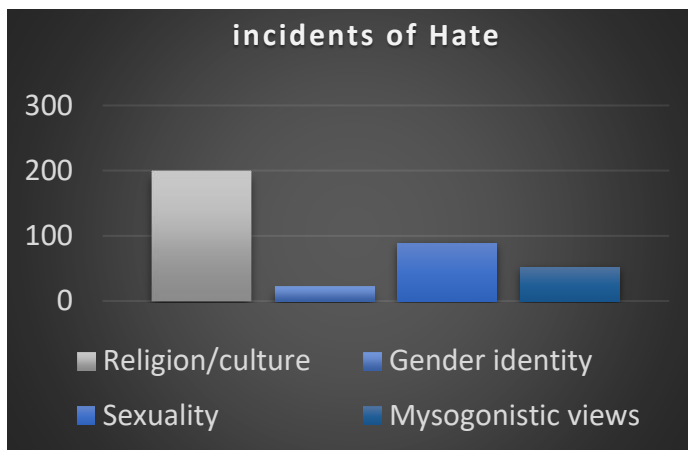
RSHE curriculum – respecting yourself, others and your community	NSPCC	3D PSHE ‘Tough Topics’
Exploring how discrimination can start	Resilience and empathy	Unicef Rights Respecting – human rights and rights to be safe
Votes for schools	Palace for Life	British Values

- 7.2 In the last academic year, there were 42 concerns raised related to extremism and radicalisation. This resulted in 18 referrals to MASH, with 16 being referred to PREVENT. The data suggests slight increases in year on year, indicating the concerns are being identified and relevant referrals made to disrupt any potential development in extremist views and future actions.



**7.3** Last year we started collating data on other areas linked to extremism. Incidents of hate related to culture, gender or sexuality for example are identified and responded to by schools. reported 311 individual incidents relating to hate, equivalent to that of the first year recording. To gain further insight into what this looks like, schools were asked to break down their data further.

The results showed the following statistics.



Some of the work to support pupils who have either been a victim or the accused has been through counselling support, referral to youth offending service, engaging with the safer school's officers, restorative justice approach and reflective conversations.

## **8. Child Sexual Exploitation and Criminal Exploitation including Serious Youth Violence and Knife Crime.**

The DfE (2017) Child sexual exploitation Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation.

The definition of child sexual exploitation is as follows:

*child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.*

**8.1** Exploitation continues to be an area of priority for Croydon as it continues to receive high profile attention within the service. When talking about exploitation, we consider within this, the following areas;

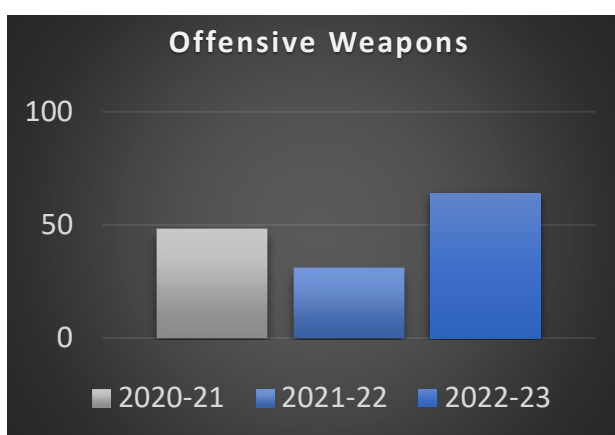
- Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- Serious Youth Violence (SYV)
- Knife Crime and other offensive weapons

Sadly, serious youth violence continues to make the headlines and the impact is also affecting us locally within Croydon. It is therefore important for pupils to know about the law in this area, and the likely consequences both for themselves and others if they are found in possession of a knife or other offensive weapon.

Croydon's local protocol states that any **knife** found on a school site must be reported to the police. This ensures the police have an accurate picture of the number of weapons found in schools and allows for support services to put in place appropriate interventions with the young person afterwards.

In addition, Croydon has a broader gangs and serious youth violence strategy alongside the Violence Reduction Network, to try and tackle the issue in a joined up and coordinated way, for example through working closely with the safer schools police, violence reduction unit (VRU) and INS Network (Tender training offer).

- 8.2** There was a spike in the number of offensive weapons found on school/college site at 64 compared to the previous year of 31. Although alarming in its content, the increase could be linked to increased collaborative work between education providers and the safer school's officers. The police teams have continued to visit schools to use knife arches, with many schools using wands. Also school police engage with young people making them approachable and building positive relationships.



The definition of “offensive weapons” is broad and some schools may not classify all possible weapons as needing a police response. It is a criminal offence to carry a knife on schools’ premises and education providers and under the local protocol these incidents should be reported to the police regardless of the severity of the incident.

- 8.2** Data showed that excluding regular knife arches and use of wands as regular practice, schools and colleges completed 346 searches of pupils on school grounds due to concerns around drugs and/or offensive weapons. This is an increase from 256 on the previous academic year. Only 5 of these searches were completed by police, in line with the previous year’s data.

Croydon has fully embedded its Complex Adolescents Panel (CAP) which meets on a weekly basis, with regular buy-in from multi-agency operations targeting victims, perpetrators, local hot spots where offences may take place using a contextual safeguarding model.

Serious Youth Violence is being collected as a statistic of it’s own from this year. The idea of this is to identify and track the number of concerns identified where young people are showing indication of involvement with SYV. The last academic year showed 58 individuals were of concern to schools.

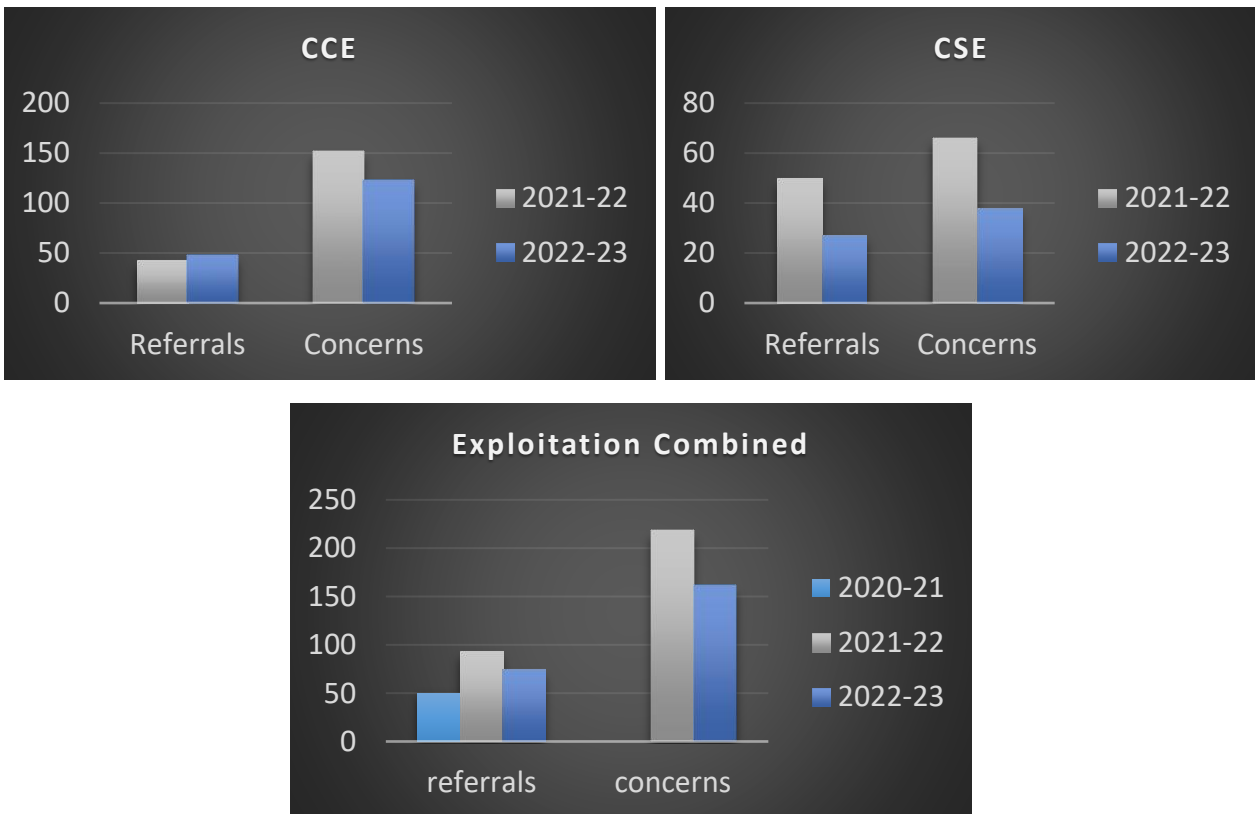
Education providers report that 45% of members of leadership teams have attended both ‘Croydon Gangs’; ‘Child Sexual Exploitation’ and ‘Supporting Young People Affected by Child Sexual Exploitation’ training or other similar training linked to child sexual exploitation, which is a further drop on the previous year (55%, 81% prior to that). Other schools have completed one area but not both and 20% have not completed any. Based on data provided by schools, this needs to be addressed for school staff to be fully aware of the risks and therefore,

safeguard the students. This will also help build a consistent approach across the borough for preventative work.

**8.4** Schools use a variety of RSE/PSHE programmes which have content linking to CCE/CSE such as bullying, peer pressure/influence, personal safety including the PANTS rule, privacy, consent, and online safety. In addition to this, many schools access external services to compliment their curriculum and share the important messages, such as.

NSPCC – speak out stay safe	Ben Kinsella Trust	Safer Schools Officers
Unique Talent	Talk Consent	Croydon Citizenship Programme
Youth Engagement Y6-7 transition programme	Palace for Life	

**8.5** The data also shows that there was a total of 68 reported referrals from providers that have gangs and/or CSE as the dominant feature. This year we have broken the data down to show how many concerns were raise for CCE and CSE separately and how many led to a referral.



The data alone shows a promising picture of progress within our schools, and with the positive engagement of external services to compliment and support the curriculum, it would appear we are seeing a positive impact on our young people.

**Recommendation**

**Explore what preventative work is being completed by schools/colleges and social care on the risks of carrying weapons and ensure schools consistently access training related to SYV, CCE and CSE.**

**Recommendation**

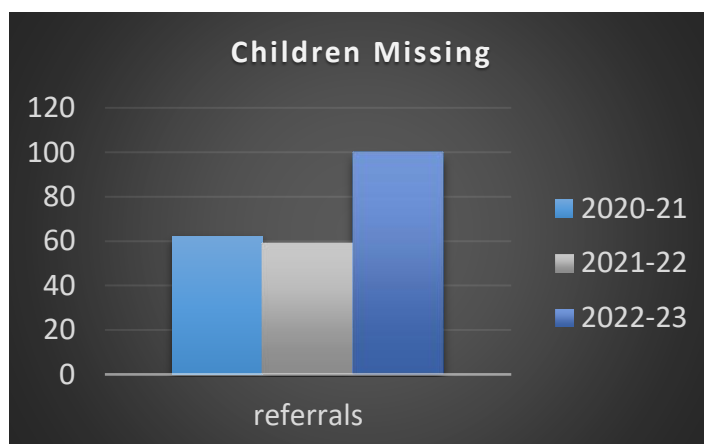
Ensure all schools are complaint with searches of students including the reasons behind requesting a search.

## 9. Children Missing from Home or Care / Education

Data indicates positive staff awareness in relation to children missing from home or care, who feel confident that they are able to implement relevant processes and teaching.

Schools and early years settings use a range of resources to teach children about the risk of running away and being missing from home/care. These include.

Developing trusted adults in school and identifying external trusted adults.	Use of specific areas in the RSE/PSHE curriculums such as 'keeping safe and managing risks.'	Safe spaces
Circle time	Police assemblies	NSPCC
Railway children resource packs	Early years links with specific stories such as goldilocks and red riding hood.	Not leaving your safe adult



Year on year data shows a spike in referrals made to MASH regarding children missing from home/care. This is a concern but could also be an indication of the impact of work completed on raising awareness in this area. We need to be aware also that this does not necessarily indicate there are more young people missing from home, just that schools could now be referring before police Merlin reports are received.

As part of our collaborative work with children's social care, Croydon LA Education attend the daily missing meeting to discuss key young people.

### Recommendation

Gain clarity around transition programmes provided by schools for Y6 pupils around safeguarding themselves in high school and when out in the community.

## 10 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) including Forced Marriage

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. Although FGM is practiced in

some cultures this practice is illegal in the UK and considered a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences.

Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) places a statutory duty upon teachers, along with social workers and healthcare professionals, to report to the police where they discover (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18. Those failing to report such cases will face disciplinary sanctions. It will be rare for teachers to see visual evidence, and they should not be examining pupils, but the same definition of what is meant by “to discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out” is used for all professionals to whom this mandatory reporting duty applies. This mandatory duty came into force in October 2015.

**10.1** When asked the question whether members of schools’ leadership team have attended training on FGM or have used resources developed by the Department for Education to aid internal training and dialogue on the issue, 90% of the schools in Croydon had done so, which is in line the previous year’s figure. Schools had been seeking an alternative to the online training in order to aid discussion and understanding which was offered recently and attended by many Croydon schools.

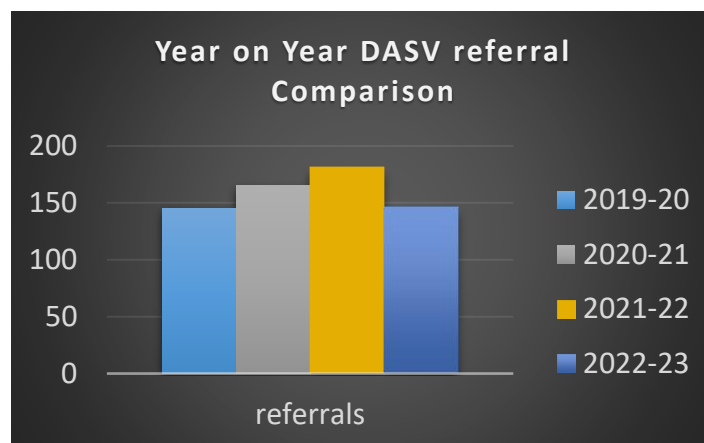
**10.2** There were 4 reported referrals made to MASH/Early Help in relation to FGM, an decrease of 3 compared to the previous year of 7.

## **11 Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DASV)**

DASV continues to be one of Croydon Council’s on-going priorities.

Data for recent training on DASV was 77%, either through Croydon LA training opportunities or other providers. This is decrease on last year but some schools had training the previous year or are due for the coming term. For some schools, this is the leadership team whereas other schools show excellent practice and have all teaching staff or whole school staff. I have attended a number of schools following a safeguarding audit where knowledge of staff has been identified as an area to develop. The focus of these sessions have been on basic awareness of DASV and the impact on children.

In comparison to last year, the number of referrals made in relation to DASV has dropped. This year there were 136 reported referrals made to MASH/Early Help due to DASV which is a decrease of 45 referrals on last year’s 181 referrals. Although this may cause questions as to whether it is being identified, it is important to remember that these are purely school referral numbers, where parents/children have disclosed or concerns noted, many referrals come from police straight to social care. It could also be that we are past the pandemic spike with was seen in Croydon as we are now inline with 2019/20 data.



## 12 Child-on-Child Abuse including Harmful Sexual Behaviour.

In 2021-22 the LA took action to improve identification of child-on-child abuse including harmful sexual behaviours following the OFSTED report on Sexual Abuse in Schools (June 2021). The audit provides some clarity around what schools have in place to educate our children and young people around healthy relationships. Part of this process included the creation of a handbook for schools and resources which is updated annually and shared for use with staff, parents and pupils.

- a. **97%** of schools report having received training on child-on-child abuse for their staff with the other 3% being senior leaders only. I have delivered training to a number of schools over the past academic year.
- b. Schools are embedding the teaching of healthy relationships and accessing a number of external services to support students in understanding areas such as consent through BROOK and Talk Consent.
- c. In the last academic year there has been a spike in concerns raised around child-on-child abuse. There were two schools with a significant number which will be discussed directly to gain further understanding of their data. In addition, without minimising the numbers, these are concerns raised by staff, and data shows that they were not all related to harmful sexual behaviour.

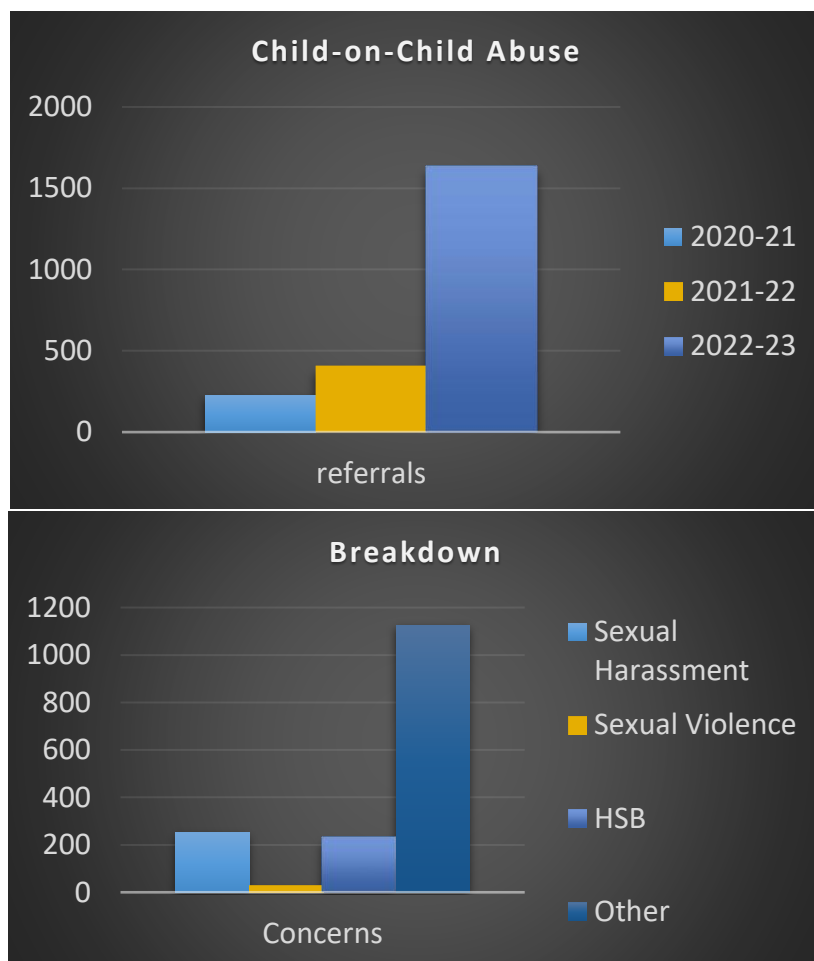
Although any increase in numbers is alarming, it also indicates that we are seeing an impact of the training and education for schools provided in helping school staff in identifying cases as well as improved curriculum encouraging young people to come forwards and report.

**HSB** - developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour displayed by children and young people which is harmful or abusive.

**Sexual Harassment** – ‘unwanted conduct of a sexual nature’ that can occur online and offline.

**Sexual Violence** (*according to sexual offences act 2003*) – rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault, and causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent.





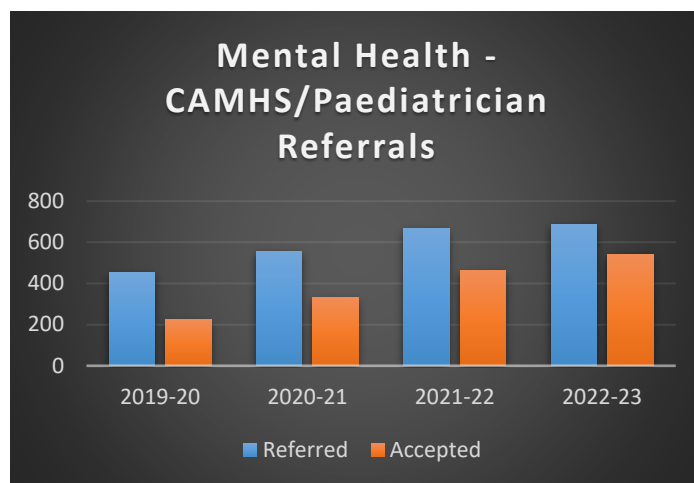
### Recommendation

**In key schools with significant numbers, complete deep dives into the types of concerns that have been raised and how they have been managed.**

### 13 Additional thematic categories for 2023 (Online Safety and Mental Health and well-being)

Mental health can impact on young people’s lives both within the family or personally. It is important that all providers are able to facilitate appropriate support for these types of concerns. Returns tell us that 98.5% of providers have access to appropriately trained mental health support. This is 6.5% increase on the previous year.

The audit found there were 688 referrals made to CAMHS this academic year as a direct result of pupils suspected of having mental health concerns. Referrals have increased by 20 from last year’s figures. 543 referrals (81%) met the threshold for CAMHS compared to 463 (69%) last year. This year-on-year increase was predicted following COVID and is a significant concern for schools, having to manage challenging situations with referral waiting time around 2 years.



Online Safety continues to be a growing area of concern with schools expressing concerns around student's use of social media as well as reported data indicating that cyberbullying has increased. There were 385 recorded incidents of cyber-bullying, an increase on the past two year's data (318 last year). 63 of these were racially motivated and 71 targeting gender identity and/or sexuality.

In addition to this, there have been 31 concerns of students being sexually groomed online.

### Recommendation

**Explore what is being taught to students about online safety in both ICT but also within the healthy relationships part of the curriculum.**

### 14 Multi-Agency safeguarding Hub (MASH)

The Children's Multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) for all referrals to early help and children's social care. The referral pathway is open to all practitioners, stakeholders and the general public. Professionals can also contact the MASH consultation for advice, provided that the case is not allocated to another social worker and the child lives in the Croydon area. The MASH consultation line is a service provided as part of Croydon's Early Help and Children's Social Care offer.

- a. Schools reported that there were 1009 referrals made to MASH this academic year by education providers, a decrease of 72 from last year.

The school reported data also found that:

- **45%** referrals to MASH were requests for Early Help intervention;
- **57%** were for children's social care intervention through MASH;
- When asked about the level of response from social workers on the outcomes of referrals they have submitted, providers advised the following;

Feedback on all referrals	Feedback on some referrals	Feedback on none of the referrals
65% (60% last year)	31% (33% last year)	4% (5% last year)

- **42%** of providers agreed with all decisions made by the front door, **48%** with some of the decisions, and **10%** did not agree with the decision made by the front door (a 6% increase from last year);
- The MASH consultation line has been used 1013 times by providers, a slight decline on the previous year of 1103;

- **91%** of schools and colleges who used the consultation line, agreed they felt it was helpful. This continues to increase year on year which is a credit to the team.
- Those who chose to use a different source of information, either spoke to the Education Safeguarding Lead, sought advice elsewhere or through email request. So of the 'elsewhere' advice is through trust or academy level safeguarding leads.

We continue, as an LA education department to work closely with the front door and social care services in being available to schools for advice and support as well as engagement and relationship building when there are changes of allocation in cases. This joint-agency approach is very much child-centred and essential in keeping schools up to date with current information wherever possible.

## 15 Early Help

The Croydon Early Help offer is fully embedded and is positively impacting on service delivery. Each locality hub uses an integrative model with a multi-agency team of practitioners that are able to lead in direct work with vulnerable children/families. Early intervention is essential in ensuring children and families receive support before any issues become complex, thus reducing the risk of harm and the need for a more intensive intervention from statutory services.

- a. Schools were asked whether staff were knowledgeable about the early help offer. 63.5% of schools felt all staff had a secure knowledge with the remaining being more knowledge within the leadership team rather than the wider school.
- b. The reported data indicated that the number of Team Around the Family (TAF) meetings in the last 12 months totalled 961 recorded meetings. This figure has increased on last year's reported 771 TAF meetings. These consistent findings clearly suggest the TAF process has become fully embedded within provider practice, indicating that schools are viewing themselves as part of the wider early help offer.
- c. The CSCP have recently published the reviewed threshold guidance. 74% of schools stated they are aware and actively use this to inform decision making for referrals. Only one school was unaware of the document despite it's wide circulation.

### Recommendation

**Early Help slides to be created and shared with DSLs to deliver to their whole school staff in line with KCSIE expectations.**

**Threshold training to continue to be accessed by education staff to encourage consistent use across the borough.**

## 16 Extended School Activities

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 states *The School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009 and the Education (Pupil Referral Units) (Application of Enactments) (England) Regulations 2007 require governing bodies of maintained schools and management committees of pupil referral units (PRUs) to ensure that at least one of the persons who conducts an interview has completed safer recruitment training. Governing bodies of maintained schools and management committees of PRUs may choose appropriate training and may take advice from the safeguarding partners in doing so.*

16.1 100% of providers with extended services continue to operate safer recruitment procedures and have DBS checks carried out on staff. 100% of providers within extended schools activities have in place a child protection policy of their own or have adopted school's procedure.

16.2 The data found that 100% of providers/schools have procedures for liaising with the school's designated safeguarding lead on child protection concerns or allegation against staff.

### 17 Elective Home Education (EHE). – Information Provided by Neil Clarke (EHE Lead)

EHE registration is currently not a legal obligation for either parents or authorities, and the current processes and procedures adequately fulfil the statutory duty that if a local authority is aware that a child of compulsory school age is not attending a state or registered independent school full-time, and it is unclear how that child's education is being provided, a local authority should consider the possibility that the child is being educated at home by its parents. In such a case, the local authority's task is to find out how he or she is being educated and whether that education satisfies legal requirements. This forms a significant element of fulfilling an authority's statutory duty under s.436A of the Education Act 1996 - to make arrangements to enable the authority to establish, **so far as it is possible to do so**, the identities of children in its area who are not receiving a suitable education. If a child is not attending school full-time, the law does not assume that child is not being suitably educated. Over the last 5 years, the rapid increase in numbers has meant that increasingly "it has not been possible" to identify children not receiving suitable education otherwise than at school, following our initial informal enquiries.

Since 2020-21 EHE oversight has become a huge task, processing and data keeping, administration and inputting records into Capita and SharePoint to ensure that the local authority is fulfilling its first duty in identifying children who are not on a school roll and who are receiving education otherwise than at school. Oversight requires the processing of new notifications, assisting enquiries, completing background checks, creating new profiles, creating EHE records and contacting professionals and parents; as well as daily responses to parents, schools, colleagues in the local authority, other local authority enquiries, and triggering general casework 'routine' tasks.

The daily running of oversight and identifying children coming into EHE remains resolute. EHE numbers are steadily increasing in line with other local authorities. It must be noted that this movement is increasingly hard to track as children securing school places are not flagged in order to ensure the EHE database and records are updated.

Any routine system of reviews had previously slipped due to the volume of work of processing new referrals and inputting databases, record keeping processes and data recording in response to the steeply rising EHE numbers and work involved in identifying and tracking children back into the school system. However, as the EHE team has now expanded to 2, I am hopeful, following successful induction, that this additional capacity will allow for a significant improvement in these figures.

Neil Clarke 30<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

Please find data with regards to the known EHE cohort within Croydon Borough during the 2022-23 academic year. Note how we record the reasons behind the decision to home school has changed. We have now aligned this to mirror the requirements of DfE census returns.

End of Year 2022-23 EHE Register	619
Total closed to EHE 2022-23	223
Reasons for closure:	
Total closed as no longer statutory school age	61
Total Moved Abroad	5
Closed due to CP Plan	3
Closed as CLA	1

Closed as deceased	1
Total Registered EHE Returned to mainstream school (Croydon)	120
Total Registered EHE Returned to out mainstream school ( OOB)	24
Total Registered EHE Returned to SEND provision	8

**Termly Trends:**

Autumn Term New EHE	82
Spring Term New EHE	50
Summer Term New EHE	120

An additional 31 families expressed an interest in elective home education directly to the EHE email address, but following discussion and consideration, the decision was made to remain registered at school.

**EHE Progress and Escalation:**

Broadly achieving age, ability, aptitude and appropriate outcomes	30
Notice served and closure of EHE	9

**Breakdown:**

Year Total EHE Mainstream	600
Year Total EHE Statement EHCP	19

**Inspections:**

Face-to-Face meetings	18
Work samples/email/post	12
Telephone summary	2

**Key Stage Starts:**

EYFS	4
Key Stage 1	25
Key Stage 2	58
Key Stage 3	109
Key Stage 4	56

**Reasons:**

1. Physical Health	7
2. Mental Health	30
3. COVID	1
4. Did not get school preference	14
5. Permanent exclusion	0
6. Risk of exclusion	1
7. Difficulty accessing school place	2
8. Philosophical	86
9. Religious reasons	0
10. Lifestyle choice	27
11. Suggestion/ pressure from school	1
12. Dissatisfaction with school -General	32
13. Dissatisfaction with school – SEND	7
14. Dissatisfaction with school – Bullying	13
15. No reasons given	7
16. Other	9
17. Unknown	15

## 17 Operation Encompass

### 18

Croydon Council is continuing to engage in Operation Encompass which is an initiative that enhances communication between the police and schools where a child has been a victim of domestic abuse. The purpose of the information sharing is to ensure schools have more information to support safeguarding of children. By knowing that the child has had this experience, the school is in a better position to understand and be supportive of the child's needs and possible behaviours. Operation Encompass will complement existing safeguarding procedures. It is extremely important that all Croydon schools are aware of this new initiative. There is a current barrier to all schools being able to sign up for this initiative. Currently the service level agreement (SLA) only covers LA maintained schools.

#### Recommendation

**Education, CSCP and police to work together to create an LA approved SLA which is acceptable by the MET, allowing all schools, including independent schools, to access this valuable information sharing tool.**

## 19 Defibrillators

The data informed that 120 providers (of those who completed the LA form) currently have access to a defibrillator which is a continued increase of providers having access to this life saving equipment.

## 20 Recommendations

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Lead</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>All DSLs must have their role and responsibility reflected in the job description in line with point 103 KCSIE 2023.</b>	During each school visit throughout the year	Cath Bennett Val Burrell-Walker
<b>2</b>	<b>School audit visits will explore the following as stated in KCSIE 2023</b> <i>Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure the designated safeguarding lead has the appropriate status and authority within the school or college to carry out the duties of the post. The role carries a significant level of responsibility and the postholder should be given the additional time, funding, training, resources, and support needed to carry out the role effectively.</i>	During each school visit throughout the year	Cath Bennett Val Burrell-Walker
<b>3</b>	<b>Bullying is showing a significant increase on the previous year. Schools to be provided with support and resources to help address these challenges and reduce the number of incidents in the future.</b>	Information to be sent via email and shared at forums	Cath Bennett
<b>4</b>	<b>Explore what preventative work is being completed by schools/colleges and social care on the risks of carrying weapons and ensure schools consistently access training related to SYV, CCE and CSE.</b>	During school visits and with key, identified schools	Cath Bennett / Val Burrell-Walker

<b>5</b>	<b>Ensure all schools are complaint with searches of students including the reasons behind requesting a search.</b>	Identify specific schools who have reported higher numbers	Cath Bennett
<b>6</b>	<b>Gain clarity around transition programmes provided by schools for Y6 pupils around safeguarding themselves in high school and when out in the community.</b>	Spring 2, send out email request for school information	Cath Bennett
<b>7</b>	<b>In key schools with significant numbers of child-on-child abuse, complete deep dives into the types of concerns that have been raised and how they have been managed.</b>	Identify schools from data provided as well as responding to complaints raised from parents.	Cath Bennett
<b>8</b>	<b>Explore what is being taught to students about online safety in both ICT but also within the healthy relationships part of the curriculum.</b>	During school visits and with key, identified schools	Cath Bennett / Val Burrell-Walker
<b>9</b>	<b>Early Help slides to be created and shared with DSLs to deliver to their whole school staff in line with KCSIE expectations.</b>	Easter 2024	Cath Bennett
<b>10</b>	<b>Threshold training to continue to be accessed by education staff to encourage consistent use across the borough.</b>	Ongoing	CSCP
<b>11</b>	<b>Education, CSCP and police to work together to create an LA approved SLA which is acceptable by the MET, allowing all schools, including independent schools, to access this valuable information sharing tool.</b>	Easter 2024	Education, MASH, Police

## **Appendix 1 - Elective Home Education Government Guidance**

Parents have the right to choose to educate their child(ren) at home, *Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 provides that: "The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable - (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and (b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise."*

### **Monitoring**

**Education Act 1996 and the authority should act accordingly.**

**Section 5.3** - There are no detailed legal requirements as to how such a system of oversight should work, and it is for each local authority to decide what it sees as necessary and proportionate to assure itself that every child is receiving a suitable education, or action is being taken to secure that outcome. Establishing a positive relationship between the local authority and the home-educating parent – where that is possible - will allow authorities to better understand parents' educational provision and preferences and offer them appropriate support. A positive relationship will also provide a sound basis for investigation if the authority receives information that a suitable education is not being 16 provided.

**Section 5.4 - In any event, the department recommends that each local authority:**

- Should provide parents with a named contact who is familiar with home education policy and practice and has an understanding of a range of educational philosophies;
- Ordinarily makes contact with home educated parents **on at least an annual basis** so the authority may reasonably inform itself of the current suitability of the education provided. In cases where there were no previous concerns about the education provided and no reason to think that has changed because the parents are continuing to do a good job, such contact would often be very brief;
- has a named senior officer with responsibility for elective home education policy and procedures, and the interaction with other work on issues such as children missing education, unregistered settings, vulnerable children, and welfare;
- Organises training on the law and the diversity of home education methods for all officers who have contact with home-educating families, possibly in conjunction with other authorities;
- Ensures that those LA staff who may be the first point of contact for a potential home-educating parent understand the right of the parent to choose home education. It is very important that parents are provided with accurate information from the outset to establish a positive foundation for the relationship. However, parents are under no obligation to accept support or advice from a local authority, and refusal to do so is not in itself evidence that the education provided is unsuitable;
- Works co-operatively with other relevant agencies such as health services to identify and support children who are being home educated, within the boundaries established by data protection and other legislation.

**The department recommends that each local authority should, as a minimum:**

- have a written policy statement on elective home education which is clear, transparent and easily accessible by using different formats as necessary, is consistent with the current legal framework and preferably drawn up in consultation with local families who educate children at home so that it can reflect both the challenges and rewards of educating children in this way. It should take into account local circumstances and set out how the authority will seek to engage and communicate with parents;
- set aside the resources necessary to implement its policy effectively and consistently. This is not always easy at a time of constrained resources; but effective implementation in conjunction with work in related areas such as education welfare, children missing education and admissions, can reduce spend in the longer term on families where engagement is difficult;
- Consider their organisational structures for dealing with home education and the related areas mentioned above. Although parents who educate their children at home sometimes say that home education should be dealt with in isolation, the reality is that it needs a holistic approach to issues of suitability, attendance, welfare and safeguarding. All of these factors need to be in place to ensure a good education outcome;
- Seek to offer guidance to all known home-educating families in their area about their rights and obligations, and also provide advice on good practice and available resources for parents who request it;
- make it clear in all documentation that the local authority sees its role in relation to home education as part of its wider responsibilities, including safeguarding, for all children living in its area;



- regularly review its elective home education policies so that they reflect current law and local circumstances, and are compatible with this guidance document;
- provide clear details of their complaints procedure and deal with all complaints in a sensitive and timely manner.

Local authorities may often choose to go further than this - for example by operating voluntary registration schemes so that support can be given more readily to those who wish to receive it, and by providing more information on home educated children in their locality. Such schemes can also help authorities discharge the responsibilities which they have under ss. 436A and 437 of the 1996 Act (see below) and the department would encourage those authorities which do not operate voluntary registration to consider doing so. However, registration is currently not a legal obligation for either parents or authorities.

**KCSIE 2021 point 166** From September 2016 the regulations were amended so that the local authority must now be informed of all deletions from the admission register when this takes place at a nonstandard transition time.

**Croydon's policy and information**

<https://www.croydon.gov.uk/schools-and-education/parents/educating-your-child-home>