Policies and Procedures Review

This guidance forms part of the Beyond Referrals audit toolkit and should help schools audit their responses to extra-familial harm[1]. This guidance outlines one method that can help a school complete their beyond referrals audit – reviewing behaviour logs.

REVIEWING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Policies and procedures are the documents outlining the systems in place within schools to prevent and respond to extra-familial harm and other safeguarding concerns. Whilst all schools should have a safeguarding policy and procedure outlining the schools response to safeguarding concerns, some schools also have particular sections of this policy or separate policies and procedures focused on particular forms of harm, such as peer-on-peer abuse.

Reviewing policies and procedures provides an opportunity for schools to review what their response to EFH is on paper. This process enables schools to identify where EFH is positioned within the school's safeguarding response and how it relates to other forms of harm (such as safeguarding concerns at home), as well as any gaps or inconsistencies within the policies. It also enables schools to see how their policies and procedures are aligned with the policies and procedures in the wider multi-agency safeguarding partnership, identifying any inconsistencies.

The person that carries out the review should sit within the safeguarding team. The review should include reading through the schools policies and procedures. It might also be useful to consider a range of incidents and see if your policies and procedures provide clear guidance on how to respond to these cases. It is useful here to refer to the guidance in the toolkit and the 'domains' and 'principles' of Contextual Safeguarding.

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1 Harm that young people encounter in contexts outside of their homes is referred to in statutory safeguarding guidance as 'extra-familial harm', harm outside of the family. In the guidance, 'extra-familial harm' is defined as:

As well as threats to the welfare of children from within their families, children may be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation from outside their families. These extra-familial threats might arise at school and other educational establishments, from within peer groups, or more widely from within the wider community and/or online. These threats can take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple threats, including: exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups such as county lines; trafficking; online abuse; teenage relationship abuse; sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation.

Working Together 2018 (s.40, page 25)

REVIEW PROCESS

Once you read through the logs you may want to take notes. When doing this you may want to consider the following questions:

1 Are the policies clear and easy to follow?

Are there any gaps within the processes outlined? Would any member of staff be able to understand and follow the policies? Are they accessible to parents and pupils in a range of formats?

2 Clear referral routes:

Does your policy outline processes for both internal referral process, as well as external referrals process for local authority safeguarding partnership? Are thresholds for referrals clearly established?

3 EFH/Peer on Peer abuse policy:

Is there a section within your policy or does your school have a standalone policy that focuses on peer-on-peer abuse or EFH? Does this section/policy outline that problematic student behaviours can be indicators of abuse? Do your policies and procedures provide a definition of EFH within these documents?

4 Welfare and safeguarding:

Is your EFH response located within your safeguarding policy and procedures? Is this the case for all forms of EFH and indicative behaviours? Do your policies and procedures outline a safeguarding response for both victims and those instigating harm?

5 School culture:

Do your policies and procedures only provide guidance for individual incidents of EFH or do they also provide responses to more contextual factors within the school environment? For example, do you provide guidance regarding addressing harmful social norms and attitudes within peer groups and/or the wider school body; such as racist, sexist, ableist or homophobic attitudes and actions amongst staff, students, parents or the wider community?

6 Partnership:

Are your policies and procedures aligned to those in the multi-agency safeguarding partnership? Are there any gaps or consistencies between your school's policies and procedures and those within the wider multi-agency safeguarding partnership?

BEYOND REFERRALS