

# **Child Protection Audit Report**

## **Bath Youth for Christ**

**April 2016**

### **Executive Summary**

Rachel Ringham Ltd has been commissioned to undertake an audit and review of Safeguarding and Child Protection policies and procedures for Youth for Christ (YFC), Bath. It was envisaged that this piece of work would build a comprehensive picture of what was happening within YFC, Bath in relation to managing safeguarding issues and ensuring all policies and procedures were in place and effective.

A safeguarding audit was designed and completed, all staff were interviewed asked the same questions around their understanding of Safeguarding and Child Protection within the organisation and all projects were visited and observed, and discussions took place with service users as to their feeling and thoughts about the programs they took part in through YFC, Bath. The overwhelming response to the interviews with the staff was a clear sense of awareness about their duty to safeguard the children and young people in their care. YFC, Bath had robust safeguarding policies and procedures in place, including those for safer recruitment. This is to be commended for such a small organisation where a wider professional network may not be so readily available. YFC, Bath do have links to Churches Child Protection Advisory Service.

The issue of safer recruitment was dealt with well for all staff employed through the safer recruitment policy however this is not so robust for volunteers. All volunteers are DBS checked but this can take longer than would be best practice due to the nature of how they work and being able to make sure their documents can be checked.

An understanding of information sharing was limited and an information sharing policy is needed for the YFC, Bath.

### **The National Context and Legislation**

- The Children Act 2004 Section 11 outlines the duty on all agencies coming into contact with children to have regard to safeguarding in carrying out their duties
- Section 13 identifies the duty to establish statutory Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCB'S) which are accountable for the co-ordination and effectiveness of arrangements to safeguard the children of the locality

- Working Together 2015 – Statutory National Guidance includes a section on the Role of the Voluntary and Private Sector which states that: voluntary organisations and private sector providers play an important role in:

“role in delivering services to children. They should have the arrangements described in paragraph 4 of this chapter in place in the same way as organisations in the public sector, and need to work effectively with the LSCB. Paid and volunteer staff need to be aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, how they should respond to child protection concerns and make a referral to local authority children’s social care or the police if necessary” (p.63; Working Together to Safeguard Children)

#### **Paragraph 4; Chapter 2 Working Together to Safeguard Children**

These organisations should have in place arrangements that reflect the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including:

- a clear line of accountability for the commissioning and/or provision of services designed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- a senior board level lead to take leadership responsibility for the organisation’s safeguarding arrangements;
- a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, both in individual decisions and the development of services;
- clear whistleblowing procedures, which reflect the principles in Sir Robert Francis’s Freedom to Speak Up review and are suitably referenced in staff training and codes of conduct, and a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children to be addressed
- arrangements which set out clearly the processes for sharing information, with other professionals and with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB);
- a designated professional lead (or, for health provider organisations, named professionals) for safeguarding. Their role is to support other professionals in their agencies to recognise the needs of children, including rescue from possible abuse or neglect. Designated professional roles should always be explicitly defined in job descriptions. Professionals should be given sufficient time, funding, supervision and support to fulfil their child welfare and safeguarding responsibilities effectively;
- safe recruitment practices for individuals whom the organisation will permit to work regularly with children, including policies on when to obtain a criminal record check;

- appropriate supervision and support for staff, including undertaking safeguarding training:
- employers are responsible for ensuring that their staff are competent to carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and creating an environment where staff feel able to raise concerns and feel supported in their safeguarding role
- staff should be given a mandatory induction, which includes familiarisation with child protection responsibilities and procedures to be followed if anyone has any concerns about a child's safety or welfare; and
- all professionals should have regular reviews of their own practice to ensure they improve over time.
- clear policies in line with those from the LSCB for dealing with allegations against people who work with children. Such policies should make a clear distinction between an allegation, a concern about the quality of care or practice or a complaint. An allegation may relate to a person who works with children who has:
  - behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
  - possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
  - behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children. Providing information and resources to the wider public about the needs of children

#### **The Process of undertaking the audit**

1. Rachel Ringham Ltd was identified as the appropriate organisation to complete the Safeguarding Audit
2. All Policies and Procedures were reviewed
3. Interview questions were developed for staff
4. Arrangements to visit all projects over a two-month period were arranged
5. Discussions with young people were used within the visits

9 Interviews were completed with all relevant staff

Visits were completed to:

1. Ralph Allen school
2. Hayesfield School
3. Bathford Youth Club
4. Southdown Breakfast Club

5. Accompanying Project
6. Motus Dance Academy
7. Mentoring Project
8. Football Project
9. Pulse

### **Policies and Procedures**

YFC, Bath had nearly all (with the exception of an information sharing policy) safeguarding policies and procedures in place. All of the policies were relevant and appropriate for the work they undertake. All staff that were interviewed showed a high level of awareness regarding the Safeguarding policy and the need to have this in place.

YFC, Bath had a process for reviewing policies and have a designated lead in place who has the responsibility to do this. Staff also understood that Trustees for YFC, Bath had a role in looking at policies and procedures and an understanding that their role was relevant and should be supportive within the development of policy and procedure.

The policies are made readily available to staff and volunteers but are not routinely made available to parents/carers and young people. It is recognised that the whole document may be overwhelming for many parents and inappropriate for children and young people. Therefore, other resources are all used to explain to children and young people their rights and how to seek help, there is a gap in the information to explain to parents and carers the project's role in

Staff were also aware and understood in place including: Health and Safety, Internet Safety, Whistle Blowing Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, lone working policy, detached work policy and volunteer processes.

### **Information Sharing**

This was an area that came across as weaker in the observations and meetings that were held. This has been recognised within the audit and an Information Sharing Protocol is being developed.

### **Training**

All staff are able to access the inter-agency Introduction to Child Protection Course offered by Bath & North East Somerset Local Safeguarding Children's Board. Not all staff have yet completed this course but the majority have and found it useful.

Training for volunteers is offered in-house and is comprehensive ensuring that it covers what they need to know.

Training needs for staff are identified through supervision and recorded appropriately.

### **Safe Recruitment**

All staff were aware that there were safer recruitment procedures in place within Bath, YFC.

There was also an understanding from all members of staff that there was a volunteer recruitment process, and two members of the staff team identified that until DBS checks are completed volunteers cannot be left alone. However, this was further explained that due to the set-up of projects this would not be an issue.

### **DBS Checks**

There was a high level of awareness of the need to undertake DBS checks on staff and volunteers.

Within the safer recruitment process, it is clear which individuals would need a DBS check.

All of the issues with DBS checks that were raised were all centred around the amount of time they can take and in some cases and the issue that there was only one or two people who could check the identifications for the checks and this can be difficult to coordinate with the volunteers.

### **Dealing with concerns about children and young people**

All staff were aware what they had to do if they were concerned about a child or young person. They knew where they needed to go for help and advice, and were able to name the safeguarding and child protection leads they needed to talk to. One member of staff was also aware that they were able to phone social care and not make any kind of formal referral but they could discuss concerns informally with a duty social worker.

### **Whistle Blowing**

All staff were aware that if they were concerned about a member of staff in relation to a concern about a child what the chain of responsibility was and who they needed to talk to. They knew that if the concerns were about the child protection/safeguarding lead they would discuss this with the chair of trustees. They were aware of the Whistle Blowing Policy and what this should be used for across the board not just in relation to Safeguarding.

### **Making Referrals – to refer or not?**

The decision on whether to refer a concern or not can still be very confusing. The process that YFC, Bath use does allow a discussion to take place as to whether something should be referred. Only one member of staff discussed with me that they could contact Children's Social Care for advice and this would not necessarily result in any type of referral. Smaller problems are able to be addressed as discussed above through the process of being able to discuss any issues with the child protection lead. alienated from the service. Nor do we want to ignore potential problems or not raise them soon enough. The other issue that is complicated in relation to referral is that communication between schools and YFC, Bath has at times during this process been lacking. It would be useful if schools who are aware that there are vulnerabilities with a young person and or a referral has been made about a young person that they share this information with the staff who are working in the school with the young people. This allows for staff to have a better understanding of the young person and to have context. This will allow for increased support and reduced anxiety.

### **Supervision**

All staff that were interviewed felt incredibly well supported within their role and by their line management. They felt that they could discuss all areas of their role with their line manager and were also offered other levels of support within their roles. Supervision was provided regularly to staff and was seen as a priority by management.

Through this process it was identified by one of the line managers within the organisation that it would be useful to have Safeguarding issues as a standing item in supervision and this has now been implemented.

### **General Safeguarding Awareness**

All of the staff that were interviewed during the course of this audit expressed a high degree of awareness about their responsibilities to children and young people in their care and were keen to 'get it right'.

All of the team were not only aware of their responsibilities but were also aware of the policies and procedures that were available to them to support them in the responsibilities that they had. They understood the importance of Safeguarding for the children and young people that they worked with and they also understood the significance of Safeguarding procedures for themselves as staff.

All staff stated that they felt safe and well supported in the roles they were performing within the organisation.

### **Interview Questions and Relevant Responses**

1. What do you understand by the term Safeguarding?
2. How do you see your role in relation to Safeguarding?
3. What do you think are the most important things about Safeguarding?
4. Do you know what the process is if a child/young person makes a disclosure to you in relation to Safeguarding?
5. Do you understand the process if allegations/disclosure were made or you were concerned about a member of staff?
6. What policies are you aware of within the organisation that relate to Safeguarding?
7. Do you have any Safeguarding concerns in the work you do?
8. Do you feel protected in your role with the policies that are in place? Is there anything you need to make you feel more protected/safer in your role?
9. What do you understand to be the difference between Safeguarding and Child Protection?

### **Responses to the questions**

1. All staff understood what the term Safeguarding meant. They were clear about ensuring that children and young people were safe, and that policies and procedures are in place to make sure this happens. There was some confusion about whether or not health and safety was part of safeguarding and although it is in the wider context in relation to this piece of work it was explained we were not looking at safety of buildings etc
2. Staff were clear about their responsibilities within safeguarding. They understood their responsibility to children and young people they worked with. They knew that they had to report issues of concern, they understood lines of accountability, they were clear on the boundaries they needed to make sure were in place in all the work they do. Although the staff were clear on accountability there is some confusion/lack of understanding that they could contact social care services for advice and discussion before any decisions about referral needed to be made. Within the organisation the process currently is that Child Protection leads need to make the referrals to social care. This can cause confusion in certain situations and does not always allow for clear referrals.
3. The staff identified the following as being the most important areas of Safeguarding;
  - a. Policies and procedures that they understood
  - b. Children and young people to understand how they will be safeguarded within the projects

c. Good and supportive line management

d. Effective supervision

e. Understanding and knowing what to do when you are concerned about a child

4. All staff were very clear about the process they followed if a disclosure was made to them about a child/young person. Not all staff felt that this was always the most helpful process. Some staff felt that although it was useful to have someone to discuss concerns with it may be more helpful if they made the actual referrals themselves.

5. All staff were aware of the whistle blowing policy but were not aware of the process within it, they understood the basics but not the detail within it. They did however know enough to be able to follow it. The staff were also aware that if the concerns were with management that they would discuss this with the chair of trustees.

6. Staff were aware of the policies that were related to Safeguarding. There were some policies (the whistle blowing, record keeping) where the overall meaning was understood but a bit more detailed understanding would be helpful. Overall their knowledge of safeguarding was good and there was nothing raised that caused concern.

7. The only Safeguarding concern that was raised was (as discussed above) about how referrals are made where concerns are identified about a child/young person. Other than this concern no staff had any safeguarding concerns in the roles they do. Although on the surface this is a good thing there would be an expectation that in the type of work that is being undertaken by YFC there should always be some level of concern in this area. However, this may be because the current process means that the staff are once removed from the process.

8. All staff felt completely safe in their roles. They felt protected by the policies and processes in place protected them within their roles. They felt that the policies that were in place allowed them to be able to explore difficult issues with very vulnerable children and young people whilst always being safe and the children and young people also being safe. All of the staff discussed during this part of the discussion about how well managed they were within their roles. They discussed that they were always completely supported by their managers. They knew that they could discuss any issues with their managers and talked openly about how "amazing" they thought their managers were.

Supportive management is crucial to safeguarding being effective in an organisation and throughout the audit effective management and support was always observed.

9. 80% of staff were clear on the difference between safeguarding and child protection. It was clear that the difference was known but there was limited knowledge on process and what should be expected when a referral is made to social care. It would be useful for staff to understand this process a bit more so that if a disclosure is made they know what the next steps may be for themselves as staff but also for the children and young people they work with.

### **Observations within the Projects**

1. The children and young people were having an amazing time in the projects and were enjoying themselves in all sessions that were observed.
2. Staff and young people had open and honest discussions that allowed children and young people to explore concerns.
3. Boundaries were clear and the children and young people respected boundaries within the projects.
4. Safeguarding was upheld appropriately and effectively in all projects that were observed
5. Staff were caring and interested in the young people they were working with. This led to open discussions from young people and a safe environment
6. A number of children were spoken to throughout this piece of work the following things were said about what they enjoyed about attending and why they attended the projects:
  - a. "The best part of doing this is spending time with Dave, he talks to me and listens"-  
Accompanying
  - b. "I enjoy having space to talk about what is going for me" – Mentoring
  - c. "I get to come and see all my friends from primary school. We are not all at the same schools anymore and coming here means we get to see each other" – Youth Club
  - d. "it's great to discuss stuff together" Life academy
  - e. "It gives us somewhere to go before school starts" Breakfast Club
  - f. "We like to come here before school, it gives us a fun place to be" Breakfast Club
  - g. "The stuff we talk about is really interesting and we don't talk like this anywhere else"  
Prayer Space

### **Recommendations**

1. The development and implement of an Information Sharing Protocol for YFC, Bath
2. An understanding of the Bath & North East Somerset Local Safeguarding Children's Board Information Sharing Protocol

3. All staff who are doing direct work with children and young people to make sure they have completed the Basic Level Child Protection Inter-agency training course and to make sure this is repeated as advised
4. All staff who are doing direct work with children and young people to make sure they complete the Advanced Level Child Protection Inter-agency training course
5. To develop a link on the YFC, Bath website that links to safeguarding information and relevant forms for local children's social care
6. To ensure that Safeguarding is a standing item on supervision and team meetings
7. Develop an understanding with schools that where you are working with children who are vulnerable and or known to children's social care it is important to share this information the staff member should be completing the referral.
8. Staff members who receive the disclosure or who have the concern about the child/young person should be having the conversation with social care and filling in the relevant referral forms where applicable. Although a discussion should take place with the child protection lead(s)

### **Conclusion**

Overall there was an immense amount of knowledge across the board in the team about Safeguarding and Child Protection. No concerns were raised throughout the process that raised any causes for concern with process or implementation.

Other thoughts whilst doing this project

1. Have Bath, YFC ever thought about offering alternative education provision?
2. Leaflet developed to put in book bags for children where there is a breakfast club for them
3. Give a trustee the formal responsibility for safeguarding