



7th April 2021

***Everyone's Invited* website - <https://www.everyonesinvited.uk>**

Dear members of London's Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships,

I am sure you will now be aware of the website *Everyone's Invited* - either through media coverage or because it has directly affected children and schools in your area. The website aims to expose and eradicate 'rape culture' through providing a platform for people to share, anonymously, stories of misogyny, harassment, abuse and assault. Many girls and young women have used the website to report experiences of harassment, abuse and assault from boys at their own or neighbouring schools. These schools are often named and the initial media focus was on the reports naming high profile private schools, however, accounts are now from a wider range of institutions and include state schools. Boys have also been posting accounts of their experiences of abuse and assault.

Obviously, a lot of work has been taking place in the boroughs which have had schools identified to support and advise the children, parents and teachers. The identity of the children who've posted accounts are not known and hence the focus of the response has been to work with whole school communities to:

- Encourage anyone who has experienced sexual harassment, abuse or assault to tell someone and seek help and support to cope with their experiences. This includes;
 - Providing information about the various helplines as well as school and other local services.
 - How to report crimes and the support available to do that.
- Review safeguarding policies and procedures as well as broader preventative work including, for example, the provision of sex and relationship education and bullying prevention, and ensure the content is fit for purpose and being implemented effectively.
- Recognise that these are instances of peer on peer abuse and, as such, the alleged perpetrators are likely to be children and will also require support, including to change their behaviour.

The website now has a clear message emphasising the need to be empathic, to listen and understand and move forward to a better future. This messaging will be particularly important where despite not being named, children are identified by peers and have to cope with the potential shame and fear that this brings and could also become targets of abuse and harassment.

The London SCP has supported local work to respond to the situation by facilitating joint working across the 3 safeguarding partners at a London level; sharing the learning from the boroughs most affected across all London boroughs and updating Local SCPs about work at a national level. Members of the London SCP Executive have also participated in the national response and fed in the learning and the concerns from London. All of this work will continue over the coming days and weeks. Below I provide the most recent update.

Update on the national and London response

The Department for Education

- The DfE have announced an immediate Ofsted Review:
Ofsted, working with representatives from social care, police, victim support groups, school and college leaders and the Independent Schools Council., will undertake an immediate review of safeguarding policies in state and independent schools.

The review, which will conclude by the end of May 2021, will look at the extent and the severity of the issue and ensure schools have appropriate processes in place to allow pupils to report concerns freely, knowing these will be taken seriously and dealt with swiftly and appropriately.

It will make sure there is sufficient guidance on how schools should deal with sexual harassment and violence allegations, and whether the current inspection regimes in both state and private schools are strong enough to address concerns and promote the welfare of children.

- The DfE, working with the NSPCC, has launched a dedicated helpline for victims of sexual abuse to provide support and guidance:
 - *Following the concerning reports provided to the Everyone's Invited website, detailing incidents of sexual assault in schools and colleges, the Government is taking immediate steps to support to those affected and ensure all schools are safe places.*
 - *The dedicated NSPCC Helpline - Report Abuse in Education – launched Thursday 1 April can be contacted by phone on **0800 136 663**, or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk*

- London Directors of Children Services
 - Are overseeing the local response to the reports – supporting schools and working to safeguard children
 - Directors in the boroughs most affected are meeting to discuss their response and plan their work going forward.

The Police

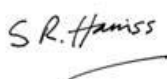
- The police response is now being co-ordinated nationally by Simon Bailey, the National Police Chiefs' Council lead on child protection – this reflecting that what started out as primarily a London issue is now a national one.
 - Through Operation Hydrant [the coordination hub which delivers the national policing response to non-recent child sexual abuse] the police are reviewing all reports and, where possible, identifying the school; whether the person reporting is a current or former pupil; whether it's peer-on-peer and what type of offense may have been committed. They will produce a statistical analysis of reports over the next few weeks.
- The Met police response:
 - A Gold Group has been convened and will meet weekly – it includes health and children's services representatives.
 - The Safer Schools' Officers are supporting schools affected.
 - Safeguarding superintendents are briefed and supporting the response.
 - Whilst the aim of the website is to provide anonymous reporting and it's important to respect this, there will be messaging explaining how to report if victims should want to do so.

We are aware that the Police, DfE and Ofsted are all reviewing entries on the website and may be making individual referrals to the local safeguarding partners in respective of named schools. We have escalated a request that these efforts be co-ordinated and will seek to ensure that responses are proportionate.

We expect that Local Safeguarding Partnerships may both develop rapid learning that we would wish to share with others and may have concerns that you want to escalate to either the London or national responses – on both counts, do please contact Alison Renouf London SCP Manager: alison.renouf@londoncouncils.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

Sean Harriss - Children's Lead, Chief Executives of London Committee [CELC]



Martin Pratt - Chair, Association of London Directors of Children's Services [ALDCS]



James Thomas - Association of London Directors of Children's Services [ALDCS]



Will Balakrishnan Director of Commissioning & Partnerships, Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime [MOPAC]



Nick Ephgrave - Assistant Commissioner, MPS



Melanie Dales – Commander for Safeguarding, MPS



Gwen Kennedy – Regional Safeguarding Lead, NHSEI London Region

