

Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board
Newsletter Issue 35: Winter 2020



**Welcome to the
Winter edition of the
OSCB newsletter.**

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1. Introduction from the OSCB Chair

Dear Colleagues

In what is only my first month with the OSCB it is my pleasure to welcome you to the Autumn Term's SIE Bulletin, which provides a timely update on what has been going on and what is coming up. In these most unusual of times it is perhaps even more important to maintain contact, keep informed and look ahead to when life starts to re-balance.



In the very short time I have been working with colleagues here in Oxfordshire, I have been immediately impressed with the commitment, professionalism and dedication to the safeguarding and wellbeing of children and young people in the county. This has been a common theme across the other partnerships where I work, with the unique challenges of the last few months being met with innovation, resilience and a renewed determination to come together to deliver those services young people need.

It is reassuring on taking up this role to find that the hard work of Richard Simpson and more recently, Jane Portman has helped established a strong and effective partnership; something I intend to continue and build upon.

I am looking forward to meeting as many of you as possible over the coming months, whether that's via the now familiar use of online platforms, or as I am sure we are all hoping, in face to face meetings. I am also keen to re-acquaint myself with Oxfordshire having been a student at what was then Oxford Polytechnic back in the 1980s. A career in policing followed during which time I developed a deeply held commitment to partnership working and the wellbeing of the most vulnerable in our society, and I hope that together we can work to safeguard the children and young people in Oxfordshire.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'D' followed by a long horizontal stroke that tapers to the right.

Derek Benson
Chair of Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board

2. OSCB Business Unit Update

The OSCB training programme is alive and kicking:

We now have eLearning courses available for 'Level 2: Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect' and 'Level 3: Advanced / Designated Safeguarding Lead' training which, once successfully completed, will provide practitioners with a certificate valid for 1 year.



Subsequent attendance at a **live webinar** will extend this validity period.

If you are confused about where you stand with undertaking mandatory safeguarding training, either Level 2 or Level 3, please do refer to the most up to date [OSCB Temporary Training Policy Document](#) for further information on the Board's recommendations for training pathways/requirements and validity of training certificates for mandatory safeguarding training courses.

Course availability:

Other courses from our programme have now been successfully translated into virtual delivery in a webinar format and the following courses still have some limited availability; do check out the OSCB website for further details - <https://training.oscb.org.uk/events-list>

WEBINAR COURSE	DATE	TIME
Generalist – Level 2	Various	n/a
DSL – Level 3	Various	n/a
Early Years Generalist	Various	n/a
Early Years – DSL Level 3	Various	n/a
Restorative Practice: An Introduction	Various	n/a
Early Help Assessment (EHA) and Team Around the Family (TAF)	Various	n/a
Restorative Practice: An Introduction		
Reducing Parental Conflict: PART ONE of two	19.01.21 other dates available	09:30 – 13:00
Domestic Abuse and Young People	20.01.21	10:00 – 13:00
Complex Trauma and Lost Identities - finding our way together	27.01.21	10:00 – 16:30

Are you interested in becoming part of the OSCB's Training Pool?

Members of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board pool of volunteer trainers from a variety of agencies delivered training to over 5000 local practitioners in 2019 and they achieved a **'Highly Commended'** Award from the NSPCC in 2018 in the national 'Safeguarding Trainer of the Year Award' from over 100 nominations!

We are always looking for additional trainers to join us, so if you are interested in this area of work and/or for your own personal development, we ask you to contact the OSCB training co-ordinator for a discussion about what we can offer in return – Gay.Suggitt@oxfordshire.gov.uk



We would ask that you:

- Are up to date with your Designated Safeguarding Lead training
- Attend a 'Train the Trainer' event
- Observe a course being delivered by experienced trainers
- Co-train 3 courses with a more experienced trainer per year

- Attend one half day trainer development session per year
- **AND** most importantly of all, **have a passion** for safeguarding children which you would like to pass onto others!

The 'Train the Trainer' course is due to move online in early 2021, with a knowledge based eLearning preparation course followed up with an interactive and practical webinar.



Keep your eyes peeled for more information!

We look forward to welcoming you onto an event soon. The OSCB Training Team can be contacted via OSCB.Training@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Learning and Improvement

Child K Learning Summary

On the 17th of November the OSCB published the findings of a historic Serious Case Review on 'Child K', an Oxfordshire child admitted to hospital with severe weight loss in 2016.

Overall, the review found that no professional had responsibility for understanding the child's needs as a whole. Key themes included a lack of understanding around the implication of Elective Home Education and fragmentation of healthcare. To read the learning summary, click on the link above or to access the full report and press statement go to the [Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews webpage](#).

The OSCB are running an online webinar on the key learning from the review on Wednesday January the 20th, for further information and to book a place please go to the [online training system](#)

Mental Health Audit Summary

An audit was undertaken in February of this year to evaluate the experience of children identified as a 'child in need' or subject to child protection planning, and children in care who have mental ill health.

The audit findings reinforce the message that clear planning is needed to get children back in to school when they are not attending. Schools are key to noticing and alerting others to the potential concern. Click on the link above to read the full audit summary.

OSCB Online Procedures updates

The Multi-Agency [Professionals Only Meeting Guidance](#) has recently been revised to provide clarity on when you can/should convene a multi-agency meeting without family involvement, and agency roles and responsibilities.

The OSCB online procedures manual will be updated in the New year with the following:

- New **Child Criminal Exploitation procedure**
- Updated **bullying procedure and local links**
- Updated **Child Protection Conferences procedure**

➤ **New OSCB Information Sharing Agreement**

All updates will be live on the [online procedure manual](#) on the 28th of January 2021.

[Thematic Review on Understanding a Child's World](#)

This thematic review draws on the key findings and strengths from local case reviews, and themes in common with national reviews, where understanding of the lived experience of the child was a key factor.

The review summarises the key learning points for practitioners, managers and the safeguarding partnership, and provides links to relevant tools and resources to support good practice. Click on the link above to read the review.

Child Exploitation Screening Tool Evaluation

Have you completed a Child Exploitation Screening Tool? We would really value your feedback!

In order to continually improve the service we provide to children at risk of exploitation, the OSCB has put together an evaluation how children and young people at risk are identified and supported. We would be really grateful for any thoughts or comments about the Child Exploitation Screening Tool, particularly if there are any areas for improvement.

The questionnaire [CE Screening tool evaluation](#) should only take about five minutes.

Thank you very much!

And finally.....

A massive thanks to you all for all that you have done for Oxfordshire's children, young people and families through this challenging year. You are amazing!!!



THANK YOU!

Thanks also to everyone who has contributed to the newsletter and Safeguarding in Education bulletin over the past year, and we hope to bring you some improvements to the format in the New Year!

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



3. The Brain Story

How can we use neuroscience in our everyday practice to improve family outcomes and build stronger communities?

The Brain Story provides a knowledge platform to articulate key scientific research about how experiences change the way our brains are built, and the mechanisms that drive the intergenerational cycle of adversity. This understanding is fundamental to improving long term mental and physical health outcomes; it is critically important for both policy and practice across health, education, social services and the criminal justice system, but also the wider community.

Using a series of powerful metaphors, the Brain Story explains the principles of brain development and psychological functioning. Each metaphor provides a key public health message including Contingent Responsiveness (Serve and Return), Executive Function (Air Traffic Control), Adverse Childhood Experiences (Toxic Stress) and Resilience. The metaphors offer a shared language for both professionals and families, facilitating mutual understanding and communication.

[Executive function video](#)

The Brain Story Certification Course is a free self-paced, online course which will take you through a comprehensive programme of the science underpinning child development, the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the mechanism underpinning their association with increased risk of later difficulties with physical and mental health.

The Oxford Brain Story

A team at the University of Oxford is working to explore and evaluate different ways of implementing the Brain Story to maximise its reach and impact. The team would love to support you and your organisation with adopting the Brain Story. Please visit: www.oxfordbrainstory.org or @OxBrainStory and contact:

- louise.dalton@psych.ox.ac.uk
- elizabeth.rapa@psych.ox.ac.uk
- katy.smart@psych.ox.ac.uk

4. Domestic Abuse Recovery Pilot Projects

Seven unique pilot projects have been commissioned from a range of providers to support both adult and children survivors of domestic abuse, experiencing trauma as a result of domestic and sexual abuse, including female genital mutilation, so-called honour-based abuse, and forced marriage.

The pilots will be responding to current need which may have been exacerbated by the recent Coronavirus safety, social distancing and movement restriction measures. The interventions will support those currently in need of trauma informed support to recover from the medium and longer-term effects of domestic abuse. The focus is on supporting survivors to gain further emotional and psychological stability and improved self-actualisation on their journey of recovery.

We expect referrals from a range of agencies but welcome in particular referrals following on after initial support which may have been provided by professionals such including specialist domestic and sexual abuse services and short term interventions by statutory, independent and community

and voluntary sector organisations, such as Children's Services, the police and other organisations within the criminal justice system and other more generic support services.

For further information on the support available and referral routes please follow [this link](#)

5. Family Solutions Plus is live

Oxfordshire Children's Services is delighted to announce that the Family Solutions Plus (FSP) model went live at the beginning of November.

The model is based on the [Family Safeguarding Model](#), developed in Hertfordshire County Council, and is a model of system change where adult practitioners are embedded within FSP teams with social workers. Teams are trained in motivational interviewing, undertake group case discussion, and follows a structured strengths-based intervention programme known as the workbook.

To deliver this model in Oxfordshire - we have created 17 teams that will form closer working relationships with local partners including schools, GPs, Community Police Teams, etc.

Within the Oxfordshire FSP model we have combined the assessment and intervention services to prevent children and families experiencing multiple changes therefore there will no longer be a separate children and families assessment service. The assessment and intervention services now sit within Family Solutions Plus, meaning less changes in workers for families.

Early Help remains a core part of the wider overarching Family Solutions Services as do Family Group Conferencing and Education, Employment and Training Services.

[Family Solutions Plus and Children's Social Care information - November 2020](#)

6. Keeping children safe this Winter

[CAPT Winter Safety Guidance](#)

The Child Accident Prevention Trust have put together some general information and advice on Winter safety and risks, including road safety on darker evenings, slips and falls, carbon monoxide and safe storage of anti-freeze/screen wash.

Watch out for dangerous toys this Christmas

The number of dangerous toys sold online to unsuspecting families is on the increase - so it's important to be extra cautious when buying Christmas presents this year.

Worryingly, if you buy from a third-party seller via one of the well-known online marketplaces, toys might not meet UK safety standards.

Online marketplaces are simply offering a shop window to sellers around the world and aren't legally required to check if a toy is safe before allowing it to be sold.

Dangers can include:

- [Magnets](#) so strong they can burn through a child's gut if swallowed
- Long cords that can strangle a child
- Dangerous levels of chemicals

- Small parts that can choke or suffocate
- Easy access to [button batteries](#) that can get stuck in a child's food pipe, cause internal bleeding and even death.

Lots of families will be looking for bargains online this year due to shop closures and financial pressures caused by Covid-19, so we're sharing tips to help you buy toys safely.

If you are able to, then **buy direct** via the websites of well-known brand names.

If you are buying from an online marketplace, **enter a reputable brand name** when you search for the toy you want, to be sure it's safe.

How to spot if a toy could be unsafe:

- Remember, toys aren't checked for safety before they're sold by an online marketplace
- If the price seems too good to be true, it probably is - it costs manufacturers money to make toys safe. Try to find something you can be more sure about
- Babies and toddlers put nearly everything in their mouths, which is why toys not designed for this age group need to state 'not suitable for under 3s' or have a warning symbol. Under 3s may choke on small parts or loose hair, so be wary of toys which feature small or loose parts and have no age warning.
- If the listing includes contradictory information about the toy - for example, it's described as a toddler's toy, but elsewhere it says it's not suitable for under 12s - think again
- Look out for suspicious reviews. If they look like they're copied from a toy's leaflet, sound very similar or were written on the same day, they could be fake
- Find out where the company is based. It's a legal requirement to have a UK or EU address to sell toys here. If they're based outside the UK or EU, the toys may not comply with UK safety standards
- The CE mark or Lion Mark show toys have been made to approved standards. However, some unscrupulous companies can fake them - so if you already have concerns, don't rely on these alone

Follow this link for further information on [Toy Safety](#)

[Think U Know: A Parents Guide to being Social Online this December](#)

Access to new tech over the winter period can provide new opportunities for children and young people but also present risks.

Click on the link about to access the Think U Know guide for parents which looks at how they can support their child to be safer online this season by focusing on 3 key areas: viewing, sharing, chatting and friending.

7. Update on implications of COVID-19 on Children's Social Care

Introduction

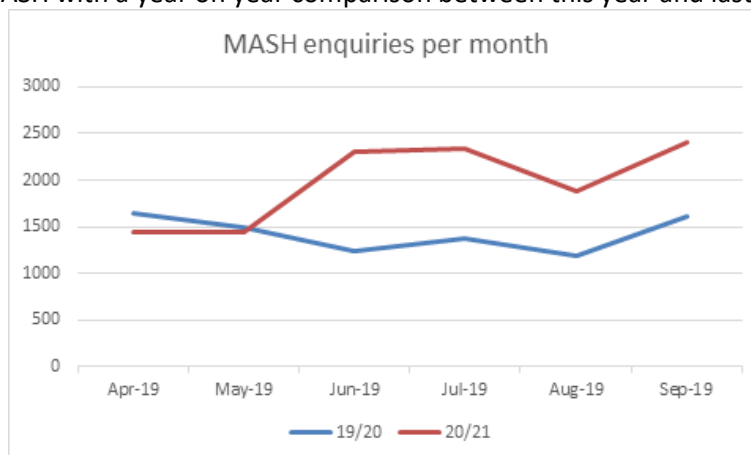
Since March 2020 the Covid19 pandemic has impacted on Children's Services in two main ways, these are:

- An increased in demand for services

- Less cases being closed due to factors outside the control of children's services

Increase in Contacts to the MASH (Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub)

The increase in demand can be seen in the graph below which illustrates the difference in enquires received by the MASH with a year on year comparison between this year and last.



The table below illustrates that initially during lockdown enquiries were suppressed, but rose sharply to almost double the level of the previous year in June. Demand has continued at significantly higher levels over the following months (though gradually reducing).

	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19
19/20	1649	1489	1241	1379	1189	1611
20/21	1441	1437	2303	2340	1887	2411
Difference	-13%	-3%	86%	70%	59%	50%

This represents a surge of work that is "flowing through" the Children's Social Care system which is already translating into more assessments and may ultimately lead to more children becoming subject to child protection plans and cared for.

For the MASH this equates to a 30% increase in workload. To manage the impact of this additional work it has been agreed that 7.2 additional workers will be temporarily employed in the MASH until demand returns to more normal levels.

The reasons for this increase in demand are multifaceted. There is an emerging body of evidence that the pandemic and restrictions imposed have increased the prevalence and complexity of a wide range of social issues (e.g. domestic abuse, mental health problems and substance misuse). Mental health organisations are also citing that increasing social isolation, job losses, housing insecurity and reduced access to services as factors fuelling a rise in adults experiencing poor mental health.

Increase in Requirement for Statutory Assessments

Children's services are required to conduct statutory assessments and to intervene to support children in need (including those in need of protection). These must be completed within tight time frames varying from the immediate protection of children at risk of harm through to a maximum time frame of 45 working days for lower priority assessments.

Effective children's services are dependent upon good throughput of work. The 30% increase in MASH contacts is increasing the number of assessments required. To meet this additional demand, it has been agreed that there will be an additional recruitment on a temporary basis of 5.8 workers within Family Solutions Plus service to complete the extra assessments.

Children subject to Statutory Plans

Children's services are also required by the Children Act 1989 to provide support to children who are made subject to plans (Child in Need/Child Protection) and children who become cared for by the Local Authority. The surge will also increase the number of children and families who require help and support on this basis.

This issue is further compounded by complications in ending social work involvement. There are two main factors contributing to this. Firstly, as a result of the pandemic the family courts are taking longer to conclude proceedings. The Ministry of Justice reported that the average time taken for care or supervision proceedings between April and June 2020 was 36 weeksⁱ (against a 27-week target). This significantly increases the time families need to remain open to social worker. The second factor relates to other agencies feeling increasingly reluctant to agree social work involvement ending. This is due to elevated concerns about pressures faced by families due to the crisis and the more limited contact with children linked to the ways schools and other services are operating at present.

Given the above it has also been agreed that teams will be given additional capacity to safely manage this work.

Youth Justice

There has also been an increase in demand for Youth Justice services due to the backlog in court hearings following easing of lockdown measures in July 2020. The numbers of new orders in the service is averaging 4 per week, and we do not anticipate any reduction in these numbers in coming months. This exceeds normal demand and capacity in the team. Court requirements for completion of pre-sentence reports also generates additional demands upon case managers.

Forecasting Future Demand

The pandemic is unprecedented and consequently it is difficult to forecast how long this elevated demand is likely to continue. It is also hard to predict how cases will progress. We are also exploring and analysing the nature of the new demand, unfortunately much of it does seem rooted in serious and entrenched problems (domestic abuse, parental mental health and substance misuse).

It is important to note that Children Services are operating "business as usual".

If you have an immediate safeguarding concern, please contact: **MASH** on 0345 0507666

If your concern is **out of hours**, please contact: **Emergency duty team** on 0800 833408

If you have a non-immediate or emerging concern contact **LCSS**

North 0345 241 2703

Central 0345 241 2705

South 0345 2412608

8. Locality and Community Support Service

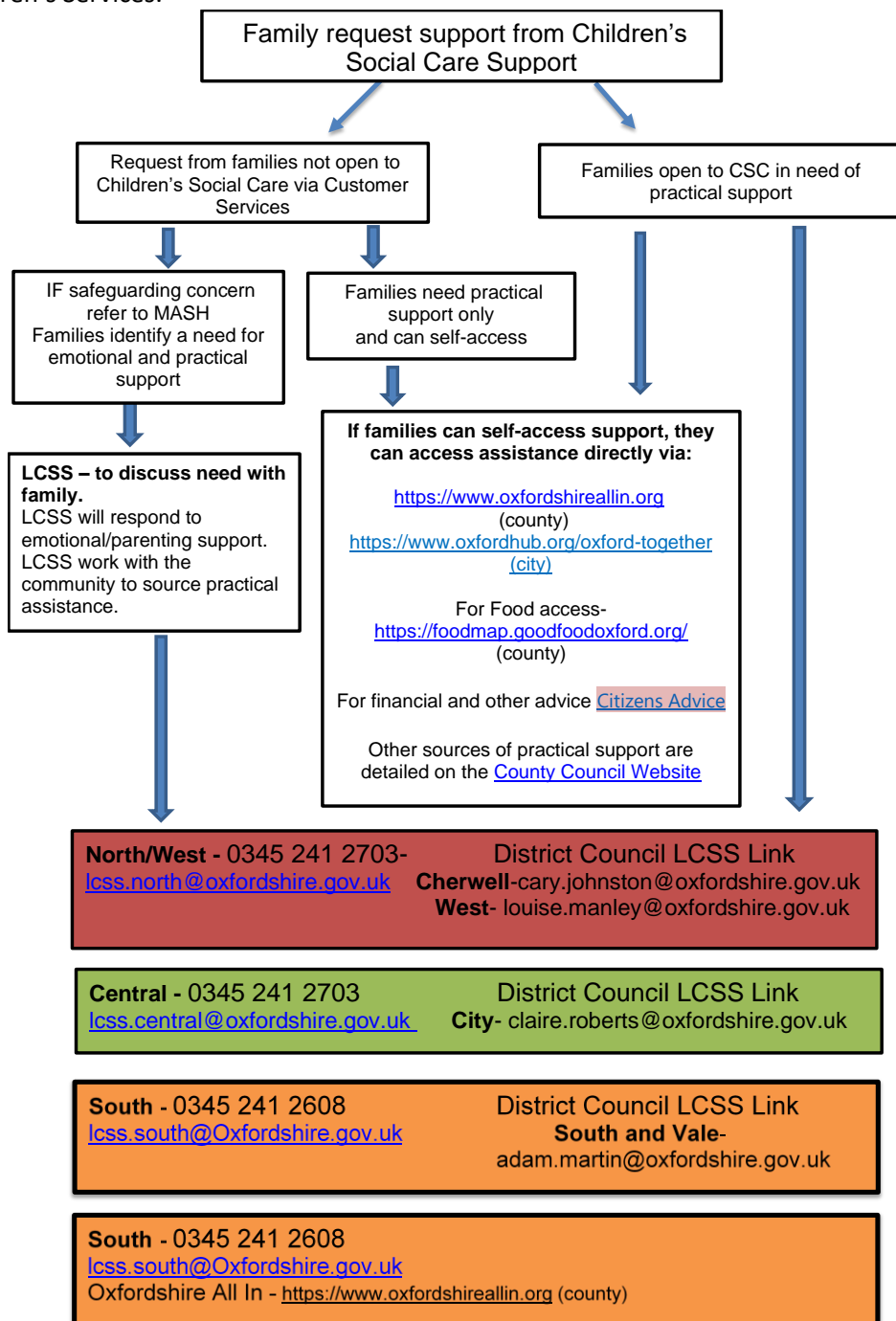
LCSS and COVID 19

As part of the COVID 19 pandemic LCSS are receiving an increase in contacts directly from families who are seeking support in terms of parenting, **emotional support** and general coping strategies. LCSS are offering telephone support including parenting interventions, signposting to online resources and liaising with other agencies about appropriate support for the family. In addition,

Children’s services are receiving an increasing number of requests from families seeking **practical support** for example food, finances, baby care products etc

In response to the increasing need for families to access practical support in a timely way LCSS are working with **Oxford Hub** for the City (<https://www.oxfordhub.org/oxford-together>) and **Oxfordshireallin** for the rest of the County (<https://www.oxfordshireallin.org>). For support around food access across the county- **Good Food Oxford** (<https://foodmap.goodfoodoxford.org/>)

LCSS are also working alongside the District Councils, Voluntary and Community sector partners, Church and Faith groups to ensure that families who require practical support will receive that support in a **timely** way. Below is a flowchart to explain the process of accessing support for families from Children’s Services.



9. Early Years update



Early Years Settings (including childminders) have shown incredible resilience and determination to provide ‘business as usual’ for children and their families during the past few months. Settings are continuing to have an additional eye on children who are vulnerable and known to them and other services, but also children who are newly vulnerable due to the pandemic.

Numbers of Covid-19 cases have remained low in the Early Years sector, but staff must continue to exercise vigilance especially regarding social distancing both in and out of the workplace. **It is important that during the pandemic families are made aware that their entitlement to funded education and care continues. This is particularly important for children who are eligible for the 15 hours Two-Year-Old Funding.** You can find out about eligibility to this funding [here](#).

By taking up the funding, young children not only receive all of the benefits of playing and learning with other children, but families can access the support that being part of an Early Years setting can bring such as early help. Funded Two Year places can be accessed through early years settings, childminders and some schools. Please continue to encourage families to take up their funded place.

The Early Years Team continues to provide the OSCB Training for the Early Years sector along with a series of early help assessment training led by the LCSS team. These can be booked through [Step into Training](#) (search under course list for Early Help).

10. Voluntary and community sector news

New OSCB Voluntary Sector Representative

OSCB is delighted to welcome Susie Besant to the board as the new voluntary sector representative. Susie is the CEO and co-founder of One-Eighty, a charity with over 9-years of experience, and positive reputation, supporting vulnerable young people (aged 4-18) with an outcomes-driven, therapeutic model, underpinned by CBT and DBT strategies.



Prior to co-founding the charity in 2011, Susie spent nearly two-years within Oxfordshire County Council, Youth Offending Service where she carried out prevention and intervention work, in addition to conducting research around the links between young people's engagement in criminal activity following disengagement with education.

Susie is excited to be part of the OSCB Board as one of the VCS representatives, learning from and collaborating with other professionals to ensure the safeguarding of children and young people is a priority, alongside equipping professionals with the tools they need to enable this.

<https://one-eighty.org.uk/>

Susie replaces Clive Peters who stepped down over the Summer having represented the sector for a number of years. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Clive, for his contribution and support on the board over the years and wish him all the best for the future.

SafeStories



SAFE! Have recently released their latest SafeStories video, Rob and Tyrone's Story. This story focuses on Rob and Tyrone and touches on an experience of child drug exploitation. The plot and characters were created by young people during workshops with SAFE! and the video was subsequently written and produced by 1848Media. You can watch the video [here](#)

The video is designed to be accessed directly by young people, as well as for use in a classroom setting, or as a resource for one-to-one support. With many thanks to Leanne Dorn and Rae Hancock at the Cherwell School in Oxford who have written a set of lesson three plans for key stages 3 and 4 which include PowerPoint presentations and resources, and accompanying teacher notes. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the lesson plans for use in school or a youth work setting, please complete this [form](#)



Children Heard and Seen

The incredible work of small local charity Children Heard and Seen, who provide support for children who are impacted by parental imprisonment, was recognised at the recent Criminal Justice Alliance annual awards ceremony where they won the Outstanding Local or Regional Organisation award. Follow [this link](#) to see the team virtually collect their award.

This follows on from 12 young people from CH&S Youth Panel winning the [Oxfordshire Youth Young Activist Award](#) for raising awareness of the stigma associated with having a parent in prison. In 2019 members of the Youth Panel gave evidence to the Human Rights Select Committee, went to Poland to take part in an international conference with Children of Prisoners Europe and co-presented a children's voice conference at Westminster with other organisations across the UK. They also gave numerous television and radio interviews to discuss the impact of parental imprisonment.

During lockdown CH&S supported children, and their parent/carer in the community to draw or write about their experience of having a parent in prison for their Christmas drawing and poetry competition. Over 60 entries have been collated and published in the booklet Life in Lockdown. The children were really excited to be published in the booklet and you can buy a copy for a minimum donation of £5 at <https://bit.ly/3jJXuut>.

Oxfordshire Youth

The National Youth Agency (NYA) as the Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body for youth work in England has, in consultation with Public Health England and the Health and Safety Executive, developed youth sector specific advice and guidance.

The guidance will support local providers, leaders, volunteers and young people to remain safe when engaging in youth sector activities. It is intended to guide the youth sector in opening services for young people at the right pace and time. Read the full guidance [on their website](#).

Brief Summary

Under 18s – Return to face to face youth work in 1-1 settings, and open access youth sessions for groups of 15 young people plus supporting staff. COVID-19 secure rules remain the same. Detached and digital youth work can continue.

Over 18s – Return to face to face youth work in 1-1 settings, triage meetings to determine ‘risk’, and formal invite only support bubbles for vulnerable members with 15 attendees plus supporting staff. COVID-19 secure rules remain the same. Detached and digital youth work can continue.

Autism Family Support

☆ **We are HIRING!** ☆ **A rare opportunity to join our award-winning family support team!**

AFSO is growing and has several vacancies including a Full time Family Support Worker! **For further details and Application Form please visit our website: [Autism Family Support Oxfordshire | Work for Us \(afso.org.uk\)](https://www.afso.org.uk)**

Closing date for all posts: Friday 15th January 2021

11.Support for vulnerable families during COVID-19

During Covid-19 there have been various Government and local Oxfordshire initiatives to offer support to families who are vulnerable or facing hardship during this pandemic.

Please find attached two documents aimed at helping professional staff signpost or access support for families during these difficult times.

The first document attached entitled:

1. **[Oxfordshire System community to support residents: For professionals](#)**

Gives a detailed overview of the current support that is available to families with contact details of the organisations offering that support.

This is a fast-changing environment so this document will be updated as and when new support becomes available. We hope this document will be helpful to you all in supporting families to access the right support.

The second document attached entitled:

2. **[Support for families open to CSC and LCSS Covid-19 response link with District Councils, voluntary and community sector](#)**

Is information that LCSS have shared with partners and we are sharing with all of you.

It describes for partners how families open to CSC can access support through their allocated Children Services practitioner. Practitioners can use the information and links within both documents to sign post or directly access support for families.

The document also describes how those families who are referred into Children Services through Customer Services where it is identified that the family do not require Children Social Care Services but a need for preventative early help emotional or practical support is identified will be signposted to LCSS to offer that support.

In addition, for your information LCSS are linking closely with the District Councils who are coordinating a lot of support within their local areas for families.

If you are finding it difficult to access support for any families that you are working with and require additional support from the District Councils please do contact the LCSS workers linked to the districts and they will support in whatever way they can.

12. National news

Non-accidental injuries to children: building confidence in making preliminary assessments (on-line learning day: Access 2/3/4 February 2021)

Many professionals who work with children will at some point be required to make a preliminary judgement as to whether a mark or injury observed on, or reported by, a child could be non-accidental. Law, and guidance from NICE, require that any injury which cannot reasonably be explained as accidental *must* be referred for medical examination. But neither law nor guidance can inform professionals *how* to make their judgement.

This on-line learning day aims to enable front-line professionals to gain a better understanding of the factors which should influence their judgement. Different types of injuries and their context:

- Medical conditions which can be mistaken for injuries
- Which injuries are common for different age groups?
- Factors which would suggest likelihood of a non-accidental injury
- The level of evidence which a court of law would require
- The questions to ask and how to record the information
- Case studies based on Serious Case Reviews

This learning day is fully on-line, with pre-recorded sessions which can be accessed flexibly over the three-day period. The Q&A session, which is in real time, takes place at 3.30pm on 4 February. Information and exercises supporting the learning day will be emailed.

[Click here for further information and to book](#)

Baby Steps programme: podcasts

Source: NSPCC Learning

The NSPCC has released two podcasts on the Baby Steps perinatal educational programme, designed to help prepare people for becoming parents. Baby Steps has been adapted and delivered virtually since March 2020 and the podcasts discuss: how the NSPCC and external partners have delivered services during the pandemic; and the research and evaluation carried out to gather insight about how the programme has been run since lockdown began.

Listen to the podcasts: [Providing perinatal education during COVID-19 through Baby Steps](#)

Young People's Board for Change

Source: NSPCC

The NSPCC is recruiting a team of 15 young people, aged 13-16 years, from across the UK to form a new Young People's Board for Change. The Board for Change will place children and young people at the heart of steering, advising and influencing the NSPCC's work, sharing their views and ideas with decision-makers like NSPCC Trustees, staff and politicians. The NSPCC is committed to offering support to young people to ensure that they play an active part in the work of the Board.

Find out more: [Young People's Board for Change](#)

Coronavirus: Winter plan

Source: Cabinet Office

The Cabinet Office has published the Government's COVID-19 Winter plan. Regarding children the plan stipulates: education settings will remain open in all tiers; when it is necessary for children to isolate, schools have a duty to provide high quality remote education; nurseries, schools and colleges should not change their Christmas holidays or close early this term; and parents should

continue to send their children to school during term time and students should continue to attend college right up until the end of term.

Read the guidance: [COVID-19 Winter plan](#)

Coronavirus: children and young people's mental health

Source: Rees Centre

The Rees Centre reports on the latest findings from the Co-SPACE study tracking children and young people's mental health throughout the COVID-19 crisis. The report finds that for participating primary school aged children behavioural, emotional, and restless/attentional difficulties have generally decreased from July, throughout the summer holidays, and as children returned to school in September.

Read the news story: [Return to school sees improvement in children's mental health](#)

Read the report: [Changes in children mental health symptoms from March to October 2020](#)

Coronavirus: child protection

Source: County Councils Network

The County Councils Network have released findings from a survey looking at the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on councils' children's social services in England. Figures show that county councils saw a 15% increase in child protection referrals for local authority support in the months of July, August, and September, compared to the previous three lockdown months when services and schools were closed.

Read the news story: [Over 600 vulnerable young people a day referred to councils after lockdown, with an increase in demand for family support during the pandemic](#)

Coronavirus: access to children

Source: House of Commons Library

The House of Commons Library has published a research briefing providing responses to frequently asked questions (FAQs) on the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on separated families, maintenance arrangements and access to children in the UK.

Read the briefing: [Coronavirus: Separated Families and Contact with Children in Care FAQs \(UK\)](#)

Coronavirus: children's rights

Source: Equality and Human Rights Commission

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has published a report expressing concerns about how the coronavirus pandemic is exacerbating existing inequalities and having a devastating impact on children's rights, well-being and futures. Key concerns outlined in a report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) include: more children being pushed into poverty, widening educational inequalities and worsening mental health.

Read the news story: [Government must do more to safeguard children's rights and protect them from the impact of the pandemic](#)

Read the report: [Children's rights in Great Britain \(PDF\)](#)

Coronavirus: home education

Source: Association of Directors of Children's Services

The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) has published an analysis of their annual elective home education survey to capture the number and characteristics of children and young

people who are known to be home educated in England. Estimates, based on data received from 133 local authorities who responded to the 2020 survey, include: 75,668 children and young people were being electively home educated on 1 October 2020, an increase of 38% from October 2019. Feedback from local authorities indicated that health concerns over the coronavirus pandemic was a primary reason for parents and carers choosing to formally home educate their child in 2020.

Read the news story: [Elective home education survey 2020](#)

Read the report: [Elective home education survey 2020 \(PDF\)](#)

Coronavirus: youth custody

Source: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation has published a thematic review of the work of youth offending services in England and Wales during the coronavirus pandemic. A survey of seven youth offending teams finds that youth court closures due to the pandemic have almost doubled, with the backlog of children awaiting court increasing by 55% by the end of June 2020 compared with the same period in the previous year. The closure of courts has meant that some children have spent longer on remand than would normally be expected.

Read the report: [A thematic review of the work of youth offending services during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

Coronavirus: impact on children, young people and families

Source: Scottish Government

The Scottish Government has published a briefing summarising evidence from Scotland and the UK on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the wellbeing of children, young people and families, including those with vulnerabilities and those experiencing disadvantage or discrimination.

Read the briefing: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): impact on children, young people and families - evidence summary October 2020](#)

Read the report: [A safe space? The rights of children in mental health inpatient care \(PDF\)](#)

Coronavirus: impact on children

Source: Public Health Scotland

Public Health Scotland has published a report looking at the impact of coronavirus on 2- to 4-year-olds. The report finds that: 34% of parents indicated that they had better relationships with their children than before lockdown and 61% felt that relationships were about the same; children had largely remained active in lockdown although quality of sleep for many children had deteriorated; and learning experiences were severely restricted during lockdown.

Read the report: [The impact of COVID-19 on children and young people - 2-4 year olds](#)

Early years

Source: The Royal Foundation

The Royal Foundation has published findings from a study of public attitudes towards bringing up children from conception to 5 years across the UK. Findings from face to face surveys and an online survey of 435,141 members of the public include: 24% of participants recognise the specific importance of the 0-5 period for providing lifelong health and happiness; 90% see parental mental health and wellbeing as being critical to a child's development; 70% of parents say they feel judged by others, almost half of whom feel this negatively impacts their mental health. A follow up online survey of 1,000 parents of 0-5s in October 2020 found that parental loneliness had increased during the pandemic from 38% before to 63% during it, and there has been a rise in the proportion of

parents who feel uncomfortable seeking help for how they are feeling from 18% to 34%.

Read the news story: [The Duchess of Cambridge and The Royal Foundation release the #5biginsights in the biggest ever study on the early years](#)

Read the report: [State of the nation: understanding public attitudes to the early years \(PDF\)](#)

Children in care: court of appeal judgement

Source: Article 39

Article 39 reports that a Court of Appeal judgement, given on 24 November, declared that the Secretary of State for Education acted unlawfully in failing to consult the Children's Commissioner for England and other children's rights organisations before making "substantial and wide-ranging" changes to legal protections for children in care in England. Article 39 launched the legal challenge after the government removed and watered down 65 safeguards for children in care in England through The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020.

Read the news story: [Court of Appeal rules education secretary acted unlawfully in removing safeguards for children in care](#)

Read the judgement: [England and Wales Court of Appeal \(Civil Division\) Decisions](#)

Special educational needs: school exclusions

Source: BBC

The BBC has released figures from a Freedom of Information (FOI) request responded to by 73 (48%) of councils in England which shows that since 2017 more than 1,300 children were given an education and healthcare plan (EHCP), which legally obliges local authorities and healthcare providers to meet a child's needs, only after they were excluded from school.

Read the news story: [Special educational needs support 'offered after exclusion'](#)

Special educational needs

Source: House of Commons Library

The House of Commons Library has published a briefing setting out the system of support for children and young people in England aged 0-25 with special educational needs (SEN). The briefing provides an overview of the system introduced by the Children and Families Act 2014 which included reform of the system for identifying children and young people in England with special educational needs (SEN), assessing their needs and making provision for them.

Read the report: [Special Educational Needs: support in England](#)

Young people's mental health

Source: Centre for Longitudinal Studies

The Centre for Longitudinal Studies at the UCL Social Research Institute has published a report looking at the mental ill-health of young people at age 17 in the UK. Findings from data from more than 10,000 young people who have all been taking part in the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS), a nationally representative study of teenagers born in 2000-02, include: 16% of teenagers report high levels of psychological distress at age 17, 24% of young people report self-harming, and 7% report self-harming with suicidal intent.

Read the news story: [High levels of serious mental health difficulties among 17-year-olds](#)

Read the report: [Mental ill-health at age 17 in the UK \(PDF\)](#)

Children's rights in mental health settings

Source: Article 39

Article 39 has published a report sharing children and young people's views and experiences of mental health hospitals in England, as told to their advocates. The report finds that children are being kept in hospital for too long, often many miles from home, and in environments not conducive to their needs and rights as children. Issues raised include: children and young people not feeling listened to or involved in the planning of their care and treatment; those wishing to challenge their detention fearing that they might be 'sectioned' if they are an informal patient; and inappropriate use of restraint and seclusion or segregation.

Read the news story: [New report calls for urgent action to protect children's rights in mental health settings](#)

Read the report: [A safe space? The rights of children in mental health inpatient care \(PDF\)](#)

Care review

Source: Children's Commissioner for England

The Children's Commissioner for England has delivered an online speech in which she presents her vision for a better care system ahead of the government's upcoming care review.

Read the speech: [Anne Longfield presents her vision for a better care system](#)

Children's homes inspections and outcomes

Source: Ofsted

Ofsted has published local authority inspection data and children's homes inspection data for England. Due to the coronavirus pandemic and the suspension of routine inspection activity, Ofsted has inspected fewer providers and local authorities than in a normal year. Between 1 April 2020 and 31 August 2020, Ofsted carried out 255 monitoring visits to 171 children's homes of all types representing 7% of all homes open as at 31 August 2020.

Read the report: [Local authority and children's homes in England inspections and outcomes – autumn 2020](#)

Personal safety

Source: Children's Commissioner for England

Date: 25 November 2020

The Children's Commissioner for England has published a report looking at children and young people's views on personal safety in their local area. Recommendations from seven focus groups conducted with 66 children aged 7 to 18 in Sheffield include: planning guidance should be amended to include children's specific need for access to safe open spaces and play opportunities; local authorities should be required to consult with children when determining their spending on public spaces; and the Government should launch a campaign to make public spaces more child friendly.

Read the news story: [Mean streets](#)

Read the report: [Mean streets \(PDF\)](#)

Care Leavers

Source: Coram Voice

Coram Voice in collaboration with the Rees Centre have published a report looking at how care leavers feel about their lives. Findings from a survey of 1,804 care leavers, collected in 21 English local authorities between 2017 and 2019, include: the majority of care leavers had moderate to high well-being, but 30% had low well-being; 24% of care leavers reported a disability or long-term health problem, against 14% of 16- to 24-year-olds in the general population; and care leavers also

reported higher levels of loneliness (22%), high anxiety (33%) and feeling unsafe where they live (16%).

Read the news story: [New analysis by Coram Voice shows stark variation in the wellbeing of care leavers across England](#)

Read the report: [What makes life good? Care leavers' views on their well-being \(PDF\)](#)

Child protection

Source: National Children's Bureau

The National Children's Bureau, the University of Cambridge and the University of Kent have published a systematic review of research looking at the relationship between parental mental illness, drug or alcohol misuse, and domestic violence in combination and child maltreatment. A review of 20 papers and 8 overviews of serious case reviews published between 1998 and 2017 found little understanding of how, or if, the three factors combine to significantly increase the danger to children.

Read the journal article: [The 'toxic trio' \(domestic violence, substance misuse and mental ill-health\): how good is the evidence base?](#)

Characteristics of children in need: 2019 to 2020

Source: Department for Education

The Department for Education (DfE) has published statistics on children referred to and assessed by children's social services in England for the year ending 31 March 2020. The statistics show there were 389,260 children in need at 31 March, a decrease of 2.6% from the same point in 2019; domestic abuse by a parent was identified as a factor at the end of assessment in 169,860 episodes of need.

Read the report: [Characteristics of children in need: 2019 to 2020](#)

Children and the law: criminal records

Source: Just for Kids Law

Just for Kids Law reports that the Ministry of Justice has announced the implementation of legislation to change the rules governing the disclosure of criminal records. After the legislation comes into force on 28 November no reprimand, warning, or youth caution will be disclosed on standard or enhanced criminal record checks. The legislation also changes the rules around minor convictions.

Read the news story: [Just for Kids Law, Unlock, and Liberty welcome new changes to the disclosure of youth criminal records](#)

Read the guidance: [DBS filtering guide](#)

Spending review: children and young people

Source: Children & Young People Now

An article in Children & Young People Now outlines plans put in place to support services for children and young people announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Spending Review published on 25 November 2020.

Read the news story: [Spending review: what has Rishi Sunak pledged for children and young people?](#)

Read the policy paper: [Spending Review 2020](#)

Online abuse

Source: Guardian

The Guardian reports that the National Crime Agency (NCA) and the NSPCC have warned that a man who admitted 96 counts of child sexual abuse online could have escaped justice if plans to strengthen encryption were in place. The proposed strengthened encryption would mean that offenders using fake identities on Facebook Messenger could escape detection.

Read the news story: [Facebook's encryption plans could help child abusers escape justice, NCA warns](#)
[Man who approached more than 5,000 children globally in child sexual abuse case pleads guilty](#)

Safer Internet Day resources

Source: UK Safer Internet Centre

The UK Safer Internet Centre has created a range of resources for Safer Internet Day on 9 February 2021. The resources for 3- to 18-year-olds look at the topic of reliability online, and the ways that young people can tell fact from fiction whilst spending time on the internet.

Read the news story: [New educational resources looking at reliability online launched for Safer Internet Day](#)

Children and young people's mental health: new normal - same crisis

This conference, organised by Open Forum Events, takes place on 17 March 2021 in London

Further information: [Open Forum Events](#)

